



CELESTE

to

J. H. Equire

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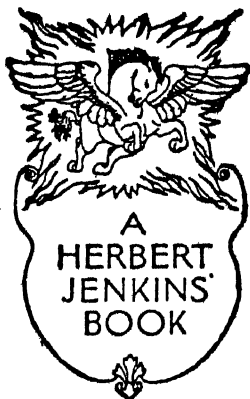
. . AND MASTER OF NONE

BY

J. H. SQUIRE

WITH A FOREWORD BY
CHRISTOPHER STONE

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To
"DON"

MY WIFE

AND THE GENTLEMEN WHOSE DEVOTION, LOYALTY AND
FINE MUSICIANSHIP, ENABLED ME TO PLACE THE

J. H. SQUIRE CELESTE OCTET

IN A NICHE OF MUSICAL HISTORY,

NEVER APPROACHED BY ANY

SIMILAR COMBINATION

FOREWORD

IT was through the gramophone records of the J. H. Squire Celeste Octet that, like scores of thousands of other friends all over the world, I grew to feel an admiration for the personality of the leader, who with unfailing suavity and judgment was building the musical bridge across which alone the vast majority of his fellowmen could, as in a dream, pass from the atmosphere of the restaurant to the wider spaces of the concert hall. We were instinctively his friends and inevitably his debtors. He had brought us, neither dazzled nor befogged, to the threshold of the treasure-house of noble music.

The man himself, urbane, monocled and immaculately clothed, revealed little of the power and versatility behind his showmanship, and it was not till he sent me the proofs of this autobiography that I began to appreciate the astonishing background of that Celeste Octet. I venture to predict that those who know J. H. Squire well, and those who only know him through his records and broadcasts and public appearances, will be equally enchanted by the romance and the thrills and the candour of the narrative.

The earlier adventures are in the tradition of Defoe and Smollett, and as the story progresses

with its emphasis on friendships and family life, on a bland fatalism and an inexhaustible aplomb, you will gradually realise that you are reading an epitome of the English character and that in essentials Jack Squire has as much right as John Bull to go down to posterity as the personification of the spirit of England.

CHRISTOPHER STONE.

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... AND MASTER OF NONE

CHAPTER I

MY father paused, but I did not dare to look at him. I was even more afraid of this sudden silence than of the shouting that had gone before it.

"To your bed!" he said.

I had expected that—and I knew what it meant. As I crept towards the door, sweating and shaking, I saw him reach for the strap.

In my little room I undressed shiveringly, my ears pricked for the sound of his footsteps. I thought of my mother and wished that she were at home. Not that she could have done much for me now, but her very presence in the house would have given me some sort of comfort. . . .

And then I heard my father moving slowly and heavily up the stairs.

He came across to the bed, looked at me and raised the strap.

In my eleven years of existence I had known thrashings in plenty, but never one quite like that. Father was of the old school and believed in beatings for boys, thorough and often, but that day he excelled himself. I was frightened enough, goodness

knows, before he started; still quivering from that verbal flaying downstairs, when he had stood over me and told me precisely what he thought of me. I was an ingrate; I had deceived him. I was sly, underhand. Worst of all, I had placed him in a false position. I was going to be taught a lesson.

Sometimes I managed to "bite on the bullet" when he thrashed me, but not that day. I screamed as the leather lashed my bare flesh: screamed with pain and mortification, and—I think—because the sense of injustice I felt was so acute. We were alone in the house and screaming was useless, but I could not help myself. Hysteria had a hold on me now. And the more I yelled the faster the blows came down.

And then, in the middle of it all, I had a bewildered impression of the bedroom door opening and of somebody standing there.

My mother had come home.

"Don't!" I heard her say. "Oh, *don't!*"

She ran forward and caught his arm, trying to get her body between us. He seemed to me blind and deaf with anger, but presently he paused and looked into her face; and then he let the strap fall. "Mother!" I whispered, almost fainting. "Mother. . . ." I lay on the edge of the bed, whimpering, and saw her lead him from the room and close the door. It was all she could do for me then, I knew. No good hoping that she would come back. One did not argue with my father or defy him beyond a point.

I crawled between the sheets and lay there, burning and smarting in mind and body. This, I

told myself, had finished me. Something would have to happen now.

Looking back, I regard that thrashing as the real start of forty years of adventure. It brought me to the end of my tether. That evening I reached the breaking-point of endurance.

Huddled up in the darkening room I wondered what I should do.

"What's the good?" I said aloud. There was nothing I could do. My mind swung between hope and misery, between defiance and helplessness; but presently I realised that I was hungry. The pain had died down a little and I remembered that I had had no tea. I had come straight home from school . . . to this.

I heard my father's footsteps again on the stairs and got down further into the bed; but this time he was bringing me a mug of cold water and a crust of bread. That was to be my meal. He set it down on the table and went out again without looking at me.

I nibbled the unappetising chunk and stared out of the window. What *could* I do?

One thing was certain. Whatever I did would be wrong in father's eyes. It was always like that.

I thought of my sister, who had never been thrashed in her life, and the hot sense of injustice got hold of me again. It seemed so unreasonable that I should always be booked for punishment while she could do nothing wrong. It seemed as if some kink in the old man made him treat me as he did.

I could hear the mumble of voices in the room below. That would be father giving mother his version of the affair, and I wondered what he was telling her. Well, I had one comfort; she, at least, would not believe that I had intended to be underhand and sly. She would understand.

My thoughts went back to the school at Noel Park, where it had all started when the headmaster had called me into his room, some time before.

"Sit down," he said. "I want to talk to you."

For a moment I had wondered if anything was wrong, but he smiled at me. "Now, you're a smart boy, Jack," he went on. "One of my best boys. How about sitting for a scholarship to the Merchant Taylors' School, eh? I believe you've got a very good chance."

"Do you think so, sir—really?"

"I do," he answered. As a matter of fact, I fancy he was right. When I was ten I had a grasp of all the subjects then taught at the Wood Green school. I had mastered the fourth book of Euclid, could do stocks and shares and write shorthand at a speed of 80 words a minute.

"I'll have a try at it, sir."

"That's right," he replied. "It's settled, then."

My mother was a teacher by profession, and was then in a post at Poplar, and I owed a lot to her careful home-teaching; but I decided not to say anything about this scholarship business at home. If things turned out well it would be a surprise for her. She would be proud of me, and so would the old man.

But it simply turned out differently, as I found

on that momentous day. As bad luck would have it, the headmaster, that afternoon, had met my father in the street. He stopped him and said—naturally enough—that he supposed my father hoped I was coming out well.

“Coming out well in what?” demanded my father.

“Why, the scholarship examinations, of course,” said the headmaster, and, as the old man still failed to appreciate the point, it was explained to him.

Father took the news quietly enough, apparently, but he went straight home and waited for me to come in. Little as I ever really knew him, I think I can understand those feelings of his as he listened for my arrival. The more he turned the thing over the angrier he became. He thought of Mr. Thompson, and was humiliated at having to appear ignorant of, or indifferent to, my welfare; he saw himself being looked upon as a man who didn’t know what his own children were doing—and that in a generation when children were thought presumptuous if they called their souls their own.

I am sure that he was genuinely outraged in his sense of paternal power, scandalised by the fact that I had dared to undertake something without consulting him.

At any rate, as soon as I got inside that door he started on me, and the thrashing followed. He would listen to no explanation, no excuse. It had never been his method to listen to explanations and excuses.

It may be that I misjudged him. He was a hard man, but hardness was in his bones. I appreciate that now. The family history, as far back as I can

trace it, shows men like my father. His grandfather, who was Mayor of Great Torrington, near Bideford, sent his own brother to the Assizes, where he was tried for sheep-stealing and subsequently hanged.

The Squires were originally Devon folk: yeoman farmers and wheelwrights and, like most Devon people, lovers of the sea. The stock produced a few wanderers and adventurers who (one must suppose) passed on their attributes to me.

From my mother's side I inherited a different strain. Here was solid, honest English stock of another type. My grandfather—the son of the conscientious Mayor—married a girl named Susan Brinsmead, sister of the founder of the famous pianoforte firm of that name. I think my love of music must have come from the Brinsmeads, for they were a very musical family apart from their skill at their trade.

This element was to develop in me later on, and mix itself oddly with the "blood and thunder" aspect of my career.

Mother's great great grandmother was lady's maid to that celebrated beauty, Sarah Jennings, who married Captain John Churchill, of the Guards, and became the confidante of Queen Anne and first Duchess of Marlborough. Mother's father was courier to a Russian Prince; her grandfather kept a large livery stable in Brussels until the eve of the Battle of Waterloo.

She told me a curious story about him and his return to England. Napoleon, as everybody knows, was the "big scare" of Europe in his day, and the rumour went round Brussels that he had defeated

Wellington and was marching on the town. Great grandfather, on hearing this, decided that Brussels was not a healthy place to be in. He hastily got his family together, left all his possessions to look after themselves and crossed to England in an open boat. It must have been a terrible journey, for my Great Uncle William, a boy of seven at the time, was so affected by the bitter cold that he became deaf and dumb, a condition from which he never recovered although he lived to a great age.

When the party settled in England, after this adventure, great grandfather started in business again in his old line, and for many years he owned and drove the Portsmouth coach.

My grandfather, John Squire, left his native village in 1837 and travelled to London by stage coach, bringing his son—Henry, my father, then a boy of seven—with him. His idea, like the idea of many country people, was to make his fortune. He settled in Sutterton Street, off the Caledonian Road, where he started to manufacture pianos, having learned the business in the Brinsmead firm. Father, too, was apprenticed to the Brinsmeads, but later broke his indentures and founded his own business. He was so successful that he exhibited pianos of his own make at the Great Exhibition of 1851—that famous affair for which the Crystal Palace was designed and erected in Hyde Park, before it was removed to Sydenham.

But to return to the matter of the thrashing.

The following morning, to my amazement, my father curtly told me that I was to sit for the

examination. I had to leave the house at an early hour, and my mother came to the gate to see me off.

She did not say much. I think of her now as a woman torn between two loyalties—my father and me. It must have been a difficult position for her, for she was as devoted to me as I was to her. She walked beside me down the path, her hand on my shoulder.

"Oh, mother!" I said suddenly, "I shall never do it now!"

"Yes you will, dear," she answered quietly. "You must try to forget your father."

But I couldn't forget; not with those weals on my back, rubbing against my shirt.

I got to the People's Palace in the East End of London, where the examination was to be held, and took my place in the classroom with the other candidates. The papers were handed to me and I started to read them. This, I decided, was going to be dead easy; and, in other circumstances, I am sure I could have made short work of them and passed without difficulty. But when I was half-way through the first question something went wrong.

I suppose the truth is that I was still sick and shaken after last night's experience; and I had made a very poor breakfast. Anyway, a black wave of nausea came over me. I gripped the edge of the desk and tried to concentrate, but it was no use. I found myself going through all that degrading scene again: the beating, the tirade, the sensation of being trapped. It finished me. I dropped my pen, put my head down on the desk and cried my heart out.

That finished the scholarship, as far as I was concerned. I failed miserably.

I went home. There was nobody in the house and it was as silent as the grave. I scuffed about, wondering uneasily what would happen next. Another beating, most probably. I almost wished that father would come in, so that I could tell him and get it over. All this would be just another humiliation for him, of course, and I knew now what happened when he felt that I had humiliated him. Very likely he would say that I had done this on purpose. It was the kind of thing grown-ups said when they had power over one, and argument only made things worse. That had happened yesterday and it would happen again today.

I looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. Nobody would be back for a long while yet. I had to pass the time somehow. I took a book down from a shelf and began to read.

The book was *Under Two Flags*, by "Ouida," and it caught my attention instantly. Hunched up on the sofa I found myself following Bertie Cecil through the pages, my eyes—I have no doubt—goggling with admiration. Here was a young man after my own heart; here was Adventure!

Adventure. That was what I had always wanted; but how should I ever begin to know what it was like, living here and being cuffed by the old man? Bertie Cecil, I decided, would never have sat down in a situation such as this and waited for what was coming to him. There was nothing like that about Bertie.

Then why was I just sitting down and waiting? That settled it. I wouldn't.

I found paper and string and went upstairs to my room. I looked at the little bed where, yesterday, I had blubbered with pain and fright. Then I looked away again. Somehow I did not care to think of that blubbering figure any more. I felt rather ashamed of it. I went to the box where my clothes were kept and took out my best suit and a change of under-clothing. Even Adventure (with a capital A) demanded such accessories. I made a bundle of my belongings, took a last look at the familiar room and went downstairs again. Here a new problem presented itself. What was I to use for money? Twopence and a new farthing—the extent of my possessions at that moment—would not take the most determined adventurer very far. Then I remembered father's desk. I found a screw-driver and forced the lid open. Inside, in a purse, were four sovereigns, and I felt no compunction about scooping the pool. I had always had more kicks than ha'pence from him and now I was merely adjusting matters between us.

For the benefit of the scrupulous I may add that I eventually repaid the "loan" with interest.

My mother, I knew, would reach home first. I could not run off without a word to her, so I scribbled a note and left it where she would find it. That finished I felt cheerful enough. I had, I told myself, done with harangues and beatings.

It was a comforting reflection, but, as things turned out, it erred on the side of optimism.

Then I picked up my bundle and slipped out of

the house. Long afterwards I learned that my father, when he got back and was told what had happened, did not say a word. He just turned away and shut himself up in a room, where he stayed for nearly four hours.

I have often wondered what passed through his thoughts during that time, but he never told or gave any sign. There may, or may not, have been a touch of remorse. Perhaps a modern psychologist could find some explanation of his attitude towards me, but to me it was (and still is) a complete puzzle.

Up to the moment when I shut the front door behind me I had no definite plan. However, I thought it best to get out of the neighbourhood as fast as I could and, as I walked an idea came to me. Somewhere I had read about cargo boats sailing from Newport, in Monmouthshire, so I decided to go there and try my luck. I got to Paddington and bought a ticket out of my little store of money.

Seated in the train, I felt no sense of apprehension. I had made my getaway, and that was enough. Now things would be different.

Just how different they were to be I had no means of judging. Had I been able to look ahead, even a few days, it is possible that my transports would have been considerably modified. As it was, I ate the bread and cheese I had brought with me, looked out of the carriage window and enjoyed every minute of the journey to Newport.

When I arrived there I went up to a policeman, who told me where I could get a cheap room for the night. I slept like a log in the bumpy bed and awoke

with a cheerful feeling that something would soon come my way. Then I went along to the waterfront.

Within an hour or so I had secured a berth as ship's boy on the *Queen Anne* barque, outward bound for San Francisco.

Adventure, for me, had begun.

CHAPTER II

I THINK my chief sensation, during that first voyage, was one of bewilderment. Half the time, in those early weeks, I lived in a sort of daze. Some years ago I saw a play called *Outward Bound*, written by my friend, Sutton Vane, in which all the people on board wondered where they were going. My feelings were very much like that.

Curiously enough, I was not homesick. I missed my mother, sometimes very badly, and I hoped that she was not worrying about me too much; but when I remembered my father relief was uppermost in my mind.

As a matter of fact, there was very little time to think about anything. The Captain of the *Queen Anne* was a hard-boiled Scot, very handy with his fists and a consummate artist with a belaying pin, as many of the crew discovered before we were many miles west of the Eddystone Lighthouse. But it was the first mate, who loomed largest in the picture, as far as I was concerned; and he started looming without any loss of time.

He was a brute and a bully, and he had it for me from the moment he set eyes on me. If there was any particularly dirty job to be done he made sure that I got it, right from the start. I can see

now that it was a roaring joke to him to have a raw lad to torment.

We had a cosmopolitan crew. There were a couple of Swedes, a sprinkling of Norwegians, a husky German, two Asiatics and five Englishmen. When they were drunk, the Englishmen, with characteristic thoroughness, were worse than the rest of them put together, and I certainly got some eye-openers during that voyage.

In the beginning I suffered a lot from seasickness, and this constituted a grand diversion for the crew, whose sense of humour was primitive, to say the least of it. One day, I remember (and I still feel a spasm of disgust when I recall the episode), they got hold of me and amused themselves by tying a piece of fat pork on the end of a string and forcing me to swallow it. The string was then pulled up again to an accompaniment of shrieks of laughter.

That is merely a sample of the kind of treatment meted out to me in the crew's comparatively jolly moments.

Three of the crew were rotten with syphilis, and only one small tub of water was available for the ablutions of the whole fore-castle. It was a loathsome state of affairs and, as I had always detested dirt, I contrived to wash myself every day on deck in a bucket of water: a display of pernickety-ness which did nothing to add to my popularity. But I refused to be chivvied out of the habit, and in time it came to be accepted as a more or less harmless personal whimsy.

The talk of these men was as filthy as their minds, and it never occurred to anybody to address me as

other than the son of a whore, or words to that effect. I soon began to understand what really comprehensive and versatile cursing meant and, incidentally, added certain enrichments to my own vocabulary. Yet I never lost that personal, deep-rooted aversion to filth of mind and body.

But among that foul crowd there was one man who was a cut above the rest. He was a rough old chap named Kerryman and, though I did not realise it then, he was to have a tremendous influence on my future. And Kerryman, I am sure, had no inkling of the truth either. In the years that followed I thought of him many times, though I do not suppose I was ever much more to him than one of a succession of ship's boys.

He had music—of a sort—in the soul of him, that old fellow. He possessed an ancient and battered cornet, and sometimes he would sit on the edge of his bunk and amuse himself by emitting loud (and frequently uncertain) sounds.

The cornet fascinated me. I would listen to him, struggling in spirit with him. When, by some chance rather than skill, I suspect, the notes were true, I hugged myself; when they were too blatantly otherwise my soul shuddered. I was at once sympathetic and critical.

Kerryman had his friendly moments, and his fairly sober ones, and when they coincided he was approachable. I watched for my chance and caught him one day in a hiatus between bouts with the cornet.

"I wish you'd show me how to play," I said tentatively.

"Hey?" he answered, surprised and (I think) a shade flattered. "What for?"

"I believe I *could*," I answered.

He eyed me up and down, shook the cornet and grinned.

"All right then, ye little bastard," he said. "Come here!"

He gave me a lesson—if one may call it that—in the art of blowing; and afterwards, whenever I saw half a chance, I experimented, and I soon picked out the scale.

I had never had any musical training but now I discovered that I had an unusually keen ear. I taught myself to play two tunes. They were "The Heart Bowed Down" and "Tom Bowling." It was not an extensive repertoire, but it was destined to prove a very useful one.

That cornet, I am convinced, kept me sane; and there is no doubt that, in those snatches of voluntary practice, I gained a proficiency that I should never have acquired through compulsory study.

I grew to like old Kerryman. He befriended me, in his rough way, and many a time his intervention saved me a hiding. He was the only one of that crew with a spark of decency in him.

The weeks dragged on and the weather became bitterly cold. It was December, 1891, and we were nearing the dreaded Cape Horn. For every yard we forged ahead it seemed as though we were blown back three, but after three weeks of battling we managed to get round, and ran into the blue waters

of the Pacific, which we found comparatively calm.

Christmas Day came; my first Christmas from home. As the weather was fair the Captain decided to relax a bit, and we prepared for our Christmas dinner. The rations were the same as usual—salt beef and weevily biscuits, but the Captain served out a treble ration of rum to all the men, and presented me with a packet of paregoric cough tablets.

And, touching the matter of ship's biscuits, I can fully endorse Mr. John Masefield's description of them in his well-known novel *The Bird of Dawning*. I am conscious of amazement, even to-day when I recall that I have eaten them with an appetite almost amounting to relish.

That Christmas might have passed off uneventfully for me but for a broken gasket which, at this particular time, broke away on the fore topgallant sail.

The first mate, obviously carrying more than the treble ration of rum, came up on deck for a breather. He observed the offending gasket and, as usual, bellowed for me in his picturesque style.

"Away aloft and splice that gasket, you lazy, bloody swine!" he yelled, pointing his injunction with a cuff that sent me reeling. Such was the amiable way of the mate.

Thanks to Kerryman's tuition I had mastered all the knots and splices by this time; so off I went, shinning up the rigging.

I got up all right and, sitting astride the spar, spliced the gasket, making it all taut and secure. The wind was bitter; it seemed to blow through my

bones. I started thinking, wondering what mother was doing at home. After all, it was Christmas Day, when a touch of sentiment might be overlooked. Perhaps it was a medley of the cold and the thoughts . . . but anyway, when I reached the deck again there were tears on my face.

Unluckily for me, the first mate spotted them.

"What the hell's the matter with you, you snivelling bastard?" he demanded. "I'll give you something to snivel for!" And picking up a piece of tarred rope he thrashed me until I fell, half senseless, into the scuppers.

Here, a bit later, Kerryman found me.

I had been resentful enough, goodness knows, after my father's beating, but compared with this the experience at home was a trifle. I stood up, my teeth chattering with rage, and clenched my small fists. I made a vow to myself, there and then, that I would get my own back—some day, somehow.

Soon after Christmas we found that we were getting very short of water, so the Captain decided to make for land in order to replenish our supplies. A day or two later we anchored off the coast of Patagonia and lowered the boats. The crew were all heavily armed with marling spikes and Colts. It was a long, sandy stretch of coast; and as we landed we suddenly heard a terrific burst of yelling, and there came tearing towards us about twenty of the ugliest and most villainous looking black folk I have ever seen. They were practically naked and their stomachs bulged like miniature beer-barrels.

The Captain took an eyeful of them and ordered us to keep quiet and not show fight. One of our number had told us that these people were cannibals, so tact was strongly indicated. They stopped a short distance away and began making signs to us, whereupon the Captain went up to them and made signs in return. These had the desired effect, and appeared to establish a more amicable relationship.

The natives went away and returned presently with goats' milk in gourds and a quantity of fruit. For these the Captain gave them a few pieces of gaily-coloured cotton material, and soon we were all on a very cosy footing. But that first sight of them had given me a bad turn. I had only seen one black man before in my life, and that a comparatively innocuous lion-tamer in a circus. We stayed ashore that night, but I do not mind admitting that I did not sleep a wink.

Next morning we found water, and for the following three days we were busy transporting it to the ship, together with a quantity of fruit. With our minds on that rather unfortunate propensity in the matter of diet, we naturally kept our weather eye open for any little ebullitions of temperament; but nothing untoward happened, and when we finally said good-bye to these blacks I had come to the conclusion that they were the politest and most friendly people I had ever met.

We resumed our voyage and, without further adventure, arrived at the Golden Gate of San Francisco. By this time we had run into warmer weather, and I shall never forget my first sight of 'Frisco from the sea.

Greatly to our disappointment we were not allowed to land. The Klondike boom had begun, and ships were being left stranded, deserted by whole crews, who rushed off in search of gold. Our Captain was part owner of the *Queen Anne*, so he was taking no chances. We had been cooped up in that tiny boat of barely 300 tons burthen for 165 days out from Newport—except for the three days when we landed for water—and our feelings were not of the softest.

To me, who had joined this ship because it was coming to San Francisco, the news that we should not be allowed to land was a bad blow. I had endured the most terrible hardships, bolstered up by the thought of seeing this marvellous city I had read so much about, and now it seemed as though it had all been for nothing. But I knew better than to show any more tears.

We reached Rio at last, but there was no cargo for us there. We were allowed ashore for about twelve hours: a break which compensated me, to some extent, for my disappointment over 'Frisco.

Rio. What a place! I forgot everything else when I found myself walking through the sunny streets of that lovely city, after entering what has been called (quite rightly, in my opinion) the most wonderful harbour in the world. At last I began to feel like a traveller. Things which, up to now, had lurked thinly in the pages of books took on life and reality. I found myself mentally storing up sights and sounds, absorbing impressions with which, later on, I meant to entertain my mother and admiring, gaping friends at home.

The day rushed by and we were off again. We

called at various Brazilian ports, but a satisfactory cargo to suit the Captain's ideas of price could not be found.

At length we were off Nantucket Lightship, two hundred miles from New York. In three days we were alongside, loading cargo. When this job was completed we were told that we could go ashore till midnight, when we were due to sail on the night tide.

I was eager to see New York, and I went along with the rest; but I stuck close to Kerryman. The crew made for the Bowery; and the Bowery, in those days, was as it has been painted in its most lurid colours. Perhaps one might liken it best to the Seven Dials of the Victorian era; the sort of place where policemen do not venture after dark except in couples. There was no quota then, and the Bowery seethed with the scum of the immigrants. There were countless saloons, all blazing with light and blaring with the noise of cracked pianos, fiddles, drunken laughter and brawls. Among the customers half-clad girls moved about, and feminine charm, such as it was, was cheap. There was something to suit all pockets; and to suit all tastes, provided one was not over-fastidious.

We pushed open the door of one of these places and went in. The usual drinking bout started, and was soon in full swing. Kerryman, who was doing very well in that line, handed the cornet over to me for safe keeping. Not without reason he doubted its safety in his own possession, for before long he was snoring loudly in a corner of the saloon, dead to the world.

The others were also in varying degrees of helplessness or rowdyism, so I slipped away to do a little exploring on my own. I started walking and went on and on, it seemed for miles; and suddenly I was brought to a standstill by a sight which nearly took my breath away.

It was on Broadway, New York's famous "Great White Way." The whole place was alight with illuminated advertisements, and I had never seen anything like it. At that time illuminated advertisements were a novelty, even in America, and the Great White Way, of course, was in its infancy. It is a still more astounding spectacle nowadays, with its Neon lights and every imaginable form of flashing sign, but it was something to wonder at even then.

I moved along the crowded sidewalks, watching the people going into cafés and theatres; I stared at the hefty policemen directing the traffic. I listened to the thunder of the ugly "Elevated," and dived into underground tunnels that were the beginnings of New York's tube system. I had a grand time.

I had lost all count of the hours, but presently the sight of a distant clock reminded me, and I realised that it must be very late. I darted over to a policeman and asked him the way and then hurried towards 10th Avenue. Could I "make it?"

I reached the dock just before three o'clock in the morning, and there I ran up and down looking for my ship. I could not find her—and for the best of reasons.

She had sailed on the night tide.

There I was: a youngster of twelve stranded in

New York without a cent in my pocket and not knowing a soul.

I was not frightened. I suppose I was too elated by all I had seen that night. Anyhow, I had run away from home for adventure, and now it looked as though I might get it, and in good measure.

I stood there on the dockside and considered the situation. Chiefly I thought of the first mate being borne further and further away with every minute; and the more I thought about that the better I felt.

Things, I reflected, might have been a lot worse. I had my freedom. And I had something else . . . poor old Kerryman's cornet tucked under my arm.

CHAPTER III

LUCKILY for me, the weather was fine though cold. I walked about aimlessly till half-past five, by which time I was feeling very hungry.

I noticed a can of milk standing outside the door of a tenement house, so I took it and made off. I had no criminal intentions, but conscience, I found, was no match for hunger. At four o'clock in the afternoon I found another can of milk, and this time I thoughtfully left my 'empty' in its place.

It was a queer day altogether, but I enjoyed it. Everything was new to me, and I suppose that occupied my mind, but by evening I realised that something would have to be done about my appetite. Somehow I must earn money. Besides, there was the question of shelter for the night.

There was only one thing I could do. I walked about until I came to a fashionable restaurant, and there I took up my stand and began to play my two tunes, just outside the entrance. I blew that cornet till I nearly burst my lungs, for I knew that 'The Heart Bowed Down' and 'Tom Bowling' ought to work the trick, properly manipulated.

I was right about that. Smartly dressed men and women—as well as less affluent passers-by—threw nickels, dimes and quarters into the hat I had

placed on the edge of the sidewalk. By the time the diners had all left that restaurant I had collected nearly five dollars.

I felt—as they say over there—like a million. Here was I, with as good as a sovereign in my pocket, and not a kick all day. I wouldn't have changed places with Rockefeller himself that night. I went back to 10th Avenue and had a whacking great meal, for a start. Then I looked round for a room and found one in the top garret of a tenement house near the docks. I paid a dollar deposit, got into the rather dubious looking bed and slept soundly till dawn.

I shared this room with a stevedore on night duty. Our sleeping arrangements were of the Box-and-Cox variety and suited us both admirably. I was out of the house before six in the mornings and, as he came home two hours later, we did not even meet, as a rule.

I had three dollars left after I had set myself up in lodgings, and now another problem arose. How could I turn my capital into a fortune? Nothing less than a fortune, of course, occurred to me at that time. I was looking in at the window of a general store when the idea came to me, and I entered and bought some brushes and blacking. The assistant who served me was a friendly soul and he supplemented these with a wooden box; so now I was all fixed for stock-in-trade as a 'shoe-shine'. Then I made my way to Madison Square Gardens, where 23rd Street joins Broadway.

A huge policeman was on duty, and this damped my ardour for a moment; but I plucked up courage to speak to him. He grinned down at me affably.

"Go right ahead, my baby," he said in his Irish-American brogue. "I'll see that you're not interfered with."

This was Big Tim Sullivan, and he certainly kept his word. For eight months I worked on that pitch, thanks to him. I was in good spirits too, for I made enough to live on, and sometimes a bit over. It was during this time that I wrote home to mother and told her I was all right. Poor soul! She must have wondered, often enough. In addition I enclosed the four pounds for the old man, with something extra.

In the evenings I sold matches in the gutter: another aid to the exchequer. And I made some friends, for Big Tim used to take me to his home three times a week. There his wife would pile my plate with food, and altogether these people were kindness itself to me. After supper it was always the same request:

"Play something for us, Jack."

By now I could play any number of tunes by ear, so the recital did not suffer from the suggestion of monotony apparent in my earlier work.

We had some cheery times at Tim's, and I shall always remember that little American family with gratitude. It was wonderful to find oneself in a real home again after the rapscaillon sort of life I had been obliged to live for so long. I used to talk to them about my own folks, too, and that did me a power of good.

But a tragedy fell on the little circle, for poor Tim was killed in a street fight. His wife, I believe, went back to her own people, taking the younger

children with her. Anyway, the home was broken up, and it made a great difference to me. I felt miserable about it, of course; and it affected my luck too, for the "cop" who took Tim's place was not disposed to be friendly towards me. In fact, he made it so hot for me that I had to quit my pitch at Madison Square Gardens.

Thoroughly unsettled, I knocked around New York, not knowing where to start again or what to do. The feeling of stability had gone and, instinctively, I felt like making a clean break. Naturally, I gravitated back to the docks. I nosed about for a while, and finally I found a berth as ship's boy on a double topsail schooner bound for 'Frisco. I gathered up my few bits and pieces and went aboard.

I certainly picked a beauty. The *Queen Anne* had been rough enough, goodness knows, but she was a palace to my new ship, the *Betsy B*.

The *Betsy B*. was commanded by a Yankee with American officers, and she carried as villainous a crew of blacks and whites as ever I saw. She was less than 200 tons, and the forecastle was filthy, as well as being crammed to suffocation. Eighteen men bunked in it: fourteen assorted "Dagoes," two Yanks and two Niggers. They were all drawn from the riff-raff of the world's "sailor towns"—and it takes a sailor to know what that means. There were times when they made the crew of the *Queen Anne* look like a choir-boys' outing.

There was another boy besides myself, and I felt sorry for that kid. I was more or less hardened to company of this sort, but this was his first voyage and he was having a rotten time all round. His name

was Henry Weaver and he came of a decent New England family. Like me, he had felt the urge for adventure and had run away from home, little knowing what was in store for him.

He was a delicate-looking boy of fourteen; just the type to be considered "fair game" by a lot of brutes and bullies. I could knot, splice, reef, steer and box the compass backwards with the best of them, but this kid wasn't so lucky. The crew, naturally, imagined that they could play hell with the pair of us at first, but I wasn't an easy proposition like Weaver.

I was inclined, with boyish bombast, to despise him at the start, but I soon changed my mind. That kid had "guts," I went for him on the first day, as a matter of course, but he stood up to me gamely, although he had no technique at all with his fists. One of the crew happened to see this little bout of ours, so they staged a fight between us when we were a couple of days out from New York.

I had no objection to a "scrap." He was taller than I, but I rather fancied myself in a fight, and felt pretty sure I could lick him without any trouble. I had scarcely spoken to him up to now, that first display being merely by way of introduction; but we began to talk, and I made a discovery about him. He detested the idea of fighting me.

It was not cowardice. It was simply that he hated being made into a show to amuse the men. This was a new point of view to me, as it well might be after my experiences on my first voyage; but somehow I understood. However, I saw that we should both be "for it" if we did not put up a fight.

"Come on!" I urged him, under my breath; but still he held back. The crew, by now, had gathered round and were shouting at us, goading us on in colourful language.

One particularly filthy taunt had the desired effect on Weaver and he squared up to me. I knocked him down at once, but up he came again—and many times after that. The blood was streaming from a cut on his mouth and one of his eyes was half-closed; but that boy surely knew how to take punishment.

Suddenly I put down my fists. I could not stand any more of it.

"That's enough!" I shouted. "I'm not going on—and to hell with the lot of you!"

At that, as was to be expected, the crew fell on us and thrashed us both. It was thus that Weaver and I became friends.

It was bad luck that we were in different watches and could not manage to see much of each other. When we got half a chance, however, we used to yarn together. It didn't happen often, for privacy was an almost unknown quantity aboard the *Betsy B.* But now and then Weaver would talk about his folks at home, and in return I would tell him about my mother. It always did me good to talk about her.

I began to feel a sort of protectiveness towards him, although he was older than I. When I could I stood by him, very much as old Kerryman had stood by me. I was able to teach him a thing or two about his job, thus saving him an occasional bashing. The experience I had already had was useful to me in lots of ways, and it gave me a certain advantage.

where the men were concerned. In that the cornet was particularly useful, too. The crew were not averse to a spot of music now and then, and I was able to supply it. Account-keeping came in handy as well; the Captain found me useful with the books. In fact, I hate to think of the mess they would have been in but for me.

I realised how much real courage Weaver had when the word went round—with typical embellishments—that he was in the habit of saying his prayers. It was a practice I had given up long ago. I tried it once in the *Queen Anne* with most unfortunate results. Howls of derision and a sharp kick on the thigh had persuaded me that prayers could be said (with equal effect, I hoped) in one's bunk. But Weaver had more pluck than I, for every night he used to go on his knees by his bunk. True, he always tried to snatch a moment when all hands were on deck or asleep; and I certainly could not blame him for that.

One evening I was down in the forecastle making tea for the watch on deck when Weaver came in. It was quiet there except for the snoring of a man in one of the bunks. Weaver, seeing his chance, and not minding me, knelt down. I went on with my job.

The man, an enormous negro known as "Big Jake" stirred and woke just then. He caught sight of Weaver, grinned to himself and put out an arm. I was watching the "Fanny," so I did not actually see what happened in that instant. The "Fanny," by the way, is a large tin holding nearly a gallon and a half of water.

Suddenly I heard Weaver shriek. Big Jake had hurled one of his heavy sea-boots at him and caught him behind the ear.

At that moment I was going up the hatchway just over the negro's bunk, carrying the tea. I looked down and saw the poor lad rolling in pain while the fellow in the bunk bellowed with laughter. The filthy brutality of the trick made me mad. Without a second thought I emptied the whole "Fanny" of boiling tea over his head and shoulders as he lay there. I can hear that negro's gasp now, and the horrible din that ensued as his laughter turned to a perfect roar of agony. The creature was like a mad bull. He threw back the blankets, screaming and cursing, and rushed up on deck, heading for the cold water tub.

There was another shindy on deck, and somebody came flying towards the hatchway. Big Jake's crony, another black, hurled himself downwards at me, intent on paying me out.

His eyes were rolling horribly. I ducked and tried to get past him, but what was the good? Anyway, even if I had managed to get on deck I should have met a few others all ready to beat me up. He got hold of me, kicked me, clouted my head, smashed me here there and everywhere before he hurled me into a corner.

I felt something snap in my arm.

Weaver had tried to help me, making grabs at the enemy, but he was in a bad way from that blow on the head, and quite useless. The negro ignored him completely, gave me a last malicious look and went up on deck again. Weaver and I examined

my injury. The bone was broken between shoulder and elbow.

In my turn I crawled up on deck and went towards the bridge. The Captain saw me and asked what was wrong.

"I'm sorry, sir," I said, "but I've slipped and broken my arm."

He did not ask for any details. I have no doubt that his experience—and the shindy that had just taken place round the water-tub—told him all he wanted to know.

"Take over," he said to the First Mate, and then added:

"Come with me, boy. I'll fix it for you."

In his cabin he sat on his bunk and felt my arm.

"Now, hold it, kid," he said; and with a little jerking movement he brought the two ends of the bone into place. I nearly fainted with the pain of it; but ten minutes later he had set my arm in rough splints and I was walking out of the cabin with him. A surgeon could not have made a better job of it. My arm healed quickly and has never given me any trouble since.

He shepherded me on deck and took over once more from the First Mate.

"Mr. Mate," he said, "this boy's broken his arm." And here he shot a baleful glance at several of the crew who were within earshot and added: "If any something son-of-a-something touches him until he's out of splints I'll rip the liver out of him. This kid's my clerk and his right arm belongs to me. Get that?"

They got it all right. The Captain never uttered a word of sympathy and never made the slightest reference to my accident after that, but for nearly a month I swaggered about the ship, with nothing to do except make up the accounts for him. Nobody dared lay a finger on me, but I had some murderous looks from those two negroes, which showed that the matter was not yet closed.

During this time I had very little opportunity of talking with Weaver, but it struck me that he was looking very ill. I was right about that, for he died before my arm had healed. His death was entered in the log as due to pneumonia, but, looking back, I have not the slightest doubt that his death was due to sheer nervous exhaustion brought on by the brutal treatment he had received from the crew. The Captain gabbled a hasty version of the burial service, and that was the finish. Poor young Weaver had slipped out of his troubles, and his body was slipped over the side.

With the healing of my arm I had to return to ordinary duty. On my first night out of the sling I was given a heavy crowbar and told to go and open a hatchway. As I passed the forecandle the man who had broken my arm bellowed up at me.

"Ha!" he shouted. "Here's his lordship back again!" And he added a number of remarks, promising me various kinds of hell when he next caught me on deck. I had been berthing aft with the cook for four weeks, but I was due to return to my bunk that night, so I knew what to expect.

I thought of that as I looked down into the black.

grinning face; and I thought of Weaver too. A spasm of sheer rage shook me.

"You'll give me hell, will you?" I yelled back. "You'll give me hell?"

"Ah will," he replied. "And wid de lid off!"

He was coming up to me as he spoke, his hands held claw-fashion, all ready to begin on me.

"Well then," I answered, "while the lid's off you have a look inside!" And with that I brought the crowbar smashing down on his skull. The whites of his eyes flickered and he slumped in a heap, falling backwards into the forecabin.

There was an outburst of shouting and I rushed away aft as though the devil himself were after me. Several of the crew came pounding behind, pursuing me to the "Old Man's" cabin, where they poured out their version of the tale. The Captain listened to them and then asked me what I had to say. When I had finished he turned to the crew.

"Get back to the fo'c'sle, all you swine," he said stolidly. "I'll look after this little devil."

Thereupon, without further words, he confined me in his quarters, pending results. Nothing definite could be done, of course, until he knew what would happen to my victim.

The negro died that night. They sewed the body up in a sail, performed the usual service and slid it over the side in the orthodox way.

That settled *my* hash. I was nominally placed under arrest, to be handed over to the British Consul at the next port of call. Then they left me to my own imaginings, which were far from comfortable. Now and again members of the crew would look in

on me and cheer me up with promises of hanging or penal servitude when we got to Rio. I did not realise that I was too young for either, and some intensive soul-searching went on in that tiny cabin.

I still continued my work on the Captain's accounts, and glad I was to have something to occupy my mind. All the same, I hadn't an atom of regret for the fate of the negro, though I had never had the least intention of killing him. I felt that, accident or no, he had been paid in full, both for Weaver and for myself; and for goodness alone knew how many other poor little devils of ships' boys!

Only once did I see the Captain during that period, and then he came in and eyed me in a speculative manner.

"Hittin' him I c'n understand," he observed. "But this is diff'runt. Why, that nigger's forehead was stove in like a busted egg!" His demeanour grew reproachful. "Boy, you should ought to be more careful."

We reached Rio and made harbour after dark. During those solitary days I had found plenty of time to think things out, and I did not intend to let myself be hanged if I could prevent it. I looked through the porthole and saw the lights of the town; I tried the door. It was not locked. I suppose they had not thought it worth while to fasten me in. No sooner had the anchor touched bottom than I sneaked out from my cabin and crept up on deck. Nobody saw me. I took a header over the side.

It was a long swim, but I got ashore. I came up out of the water and looked back at the *Betsy B.*

Maryland, a black silhouette as she rode at anchor. That was my last sight of the evil ship.

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Rio de Janeiro was an unsettled city in those days. Fortunately, I had a little store of American dollars sewn into the tail of my shirt, where I had put them for safety before going aboard. I found a cheap lodging for a few days, and during that time I discovered that there was a war on. Hostilities had broken out between the Brazilian admiral afloat and the Brazilian general ashore—or so I gathered. There were recruiting offices on either side of the street, with the rival officers blaspheming loudly at each other from morning until the time of the siesta. Then, to my astonishment, they would meet and stroll off together, presumably to lunch.

I was thirteen at the time and splendidly impartial as to their views. War, anyhow looked good to me, and I decided to be mixed up in it somehow. So I presented myself at the recruiting office on the right-hand side of the street as one went seawards.

They took a look at me and threw me out. I gathered a general idea that they considered me too young to be of any use to them. I crossed the road and went into the other office, and here I found an interpreter of sorts. By means of the nouns-and-pointing system of communication I managed to convey to him that I could blow a trumpet, and at that they became interested. An officer in a spectacular uniform ordered a trumpet to be brought and I "did my stuff." He was suitably impressed, and papers were given me to sign, though what they

were about I have no notion. I was presented with a dollar (one day's pay) and then marched out of the city to a large camp. There I was assigned to a hut which I was to share with half-a-dozen warriors: dark-eyed, cigarette-smoking men in tattered uniforms and a sketchy assortment of civilian rags.

I was in the War. This was the life!

CHAPTER IV

THE next three or four weeks were taken up with incessant drills. I was attached to an officer who, in our own army, would have been the adjutant, and my job was to follow him about and blow trumpet calls when required.

After about fifteen days of this I plucked up courage to ask him, not unreasonably, when I could have some more pay, but my query was not well received. He glared at me for a second and then ignored the question. Then I approached a sergeant, who winked at me affably and informed me in broken English that I should get everything due to me "when we had won." With this somewhat nebulous assurance I had to be content.

I have seen *real* war since then, and when I look back on that campaign I always think of it as something between comic opera and *Alice in Wonderland*. But it had its grim moments too. The rank and file were shot on the slightest provocation—a procedure which was known as *L'Exemple Grande*. It may be that, with such a motley collection of men, it was all the officers knew in the way of maintaining discipline.

I shall never forget my first impression of "L'Exemple." All troops had fallen in on a flat open space just outside the camp hutments. As I

could not understand the language I did not know what was going to happen, but presently I saw a squad of men and a single officer march up briskly with four prisoners walking two-and-two in the middle of the squad.

They were our own men. I had played Faro with one of them: a bronzed, hawk-nosed fellow named Pedro. A cheery soul he was, always showing his white teeth in a smile. I do not think he could have been more than seventeen. This chap had run away into Rio to see his girl, and a patrol had picked him up. The three other men were rank and file "Tommies" unknown to me.

All of them seemed quite unconcerned. Pedro grinned at me as he passed and shouted a greeting to a friend. Then the squad came to a halt by four wooden stakes in the open place; the officer barked an order and the prisoners were given spades. Without the slightest sign of protest they set to and dug their own graves—one grave to each post. It took them only about twenty minutes, for the graves were already marked out and there was no need for them to be deep.

This finished, the prisoners were pinioned, blindfolded and bound, each to his own post. The firing squad took up its position, the officer gave the word of command, a volley rang out and the four figures went limp.

It was horrible. When I saw Pedro crumple up I felt sick. The bodies were then tumbled into their graves, sprinkled with quicklime and covered with earth.

Such was the "Grand Example."

During the five months I served under Brazilian colours I must have seen at least a score of executions like that, though they were usually one man at a time. The example seemed to have very little effect on the troops, however, for they continued to desert. In fact, their air of nonchalance towards the whole thing was astounding. One fellow even picked a couple of flowers on the way to execution and, with macabre waggishness, stuck them in the soil by this open grave—one at the head and one at the foot!

Meantime, as far as I was concerned, the pay problem was becoming acute. The dollar a day owing to me represented a tidy sum by now, and I needed money for food. The Commissariat Department left much to be desired and, being a growing kid, I was always half starved. I would have sold the entire army gladly (with the headquarters staff thrown in) for a couple of tins of salmon and a good hunk of bread.

All the same, taking it by and large, I enjoyed that war except for two things: the bad grub and my ignorance of Spanish—which meant that it was impossible for me to have any sort of real talk with a friend. Sometimes it made me feel very much like a stray dog, trying and straining to understand an odd word or two of human speech.

Reveille was at five o'clock. Then came a wash (if one proved to be lucky), followed by breakfast, such as it was. It usually consisted of a hunk of black bread washed down with a tepid, slushy fluid alleged to be coffee. After that we marched out and began firing at something which might, or might not, have been the enemy. There was a delightful

vagueness about the whole thing and, as often as not, the enemy did not happen to be there at all. However, we carried on with this till about four, when we returned to camp for more black bread, this time accompanied by an indescribable stew of potatoes, vegetables and scraps of meat.

The officers used to get permission to go into Rio in the evenings, but for the troops the camp was our extreme limit, and the punishment for disobeying orders or going out of bounds was death.

We filled in those interminable hours as best we could: gambling with small silver and copper money, and some of the men used to sit about telling one another endless stories which I could not follow. We never drew our pay, of course. Now and then, with fearful secrecy, I changed one of my American dollars, but my little hoard was coming to an end. In five months I had lost every cent—and a stone in weight—and I was getting desperate. It occurred to me, pretty forcibly, that what I needed was a temporary change of scene.

Discipline was very slack. It was not at all difficult to pass the sentries and sneak out of camp under cover of "dinner" activities. Rio was only a few miles away, so I decided to go there and do a bit of scrounging.

I awaited my chance and headed for the city, running all the way. I dared not show myself, of course, being in uniform, but I was so ravenous with hunger that I crept round the dustbins at the back of the hotels and foraged for scraps. I found a bully beef tin, only half empty, and had a glorious meal, followed by a drink from a horse-trough.

Feeling more comfortable, I started back for camp, hoping to make it before "lights out."

Just outside the camp somebody saw me; not a sentry, but one of our own officers, just returning, as I was, from Rio. His meal had not been restricted to dustbins, by any manner of means, and he was in fine fettle. He pounced on me, seized me by the collar and marched me straight to the Colonel's quarters.

The young officer was obviously elated at having made the capture, but the Colonel, a cadaverous, grey-moustached man, was not interested. He was, at the moment, busy working out a chess problem on a pocket board. Without removing his attention or looking up he flapped an airily impatient hand and remarked:

"Take him away and have him shot in the morning."

I did not need to understand his actual words in order to appreciate his meaning. In any case, my captor made things quite plain to me as he led me away. He went through a pantomime of raising a rifle to his shoulder, blowing out his lips in a popping sound.

"Grand Example!" he said in English, for my further enlightenment.

Then, for a while, I really was badly frightened. My finish seemed inevitable this time; and I kept thinking of that crumpled-up figure of poor Pedro, and the way he had flashed his white teeth at me as he passed on to dig his own grave.

As we crossed the camp another officer fell in with my captor, and the pair of them, with me in

charge, turned into the latter's quarters, presumably to have a drink before I was handed over to the guard. The hut we entered was rather better than the men's quarters. It contained a couple of cots, a table and three or four chairs, and there was an aperture in the wall which served as a window. This opening, very like the top of a coffee-stall, could be closed by means of lowering the flap, which was held up by two chains.

There was a sentry on duty outside, but the officer's orderly, who should have had supper ready for him, was not to be found. Both the officers, highly aggrieved by this, said something to the sentry outside, pointing significantly to me. Then they ordered me to prepare supper from what materials there were. It was quite a simple job, consisting of opening a tin of beef and drawing corks at frequent intervals.

They played piquet together as they had their meal, and one of them handed me a glass of sourish wine in the most friendly way, explaining in fragmentary English that it was the last I should ever drink.

"Good wine!" he said encouragingly, watching me sip it; and then he repeated that ominous popping noise with his lips. This amused the pair of them immensely, and they roared with laughter.

Soon they became engrossed in their game and forgot me entirely, what time I leaned against the wall and thought uncomfortable thoughts. In about half an hour, however, I was roused by an altercation at the table, and realised that there was a spot of trouble going on. They got to their feet and

shouted at each other, waving their arms. I took this to mean that they were differing on some point of rules, but judging by the small change on the table between them, the total stakes could not have been worth more than three or four shillings.

Eventually, after some hectic argument during which the average individual might well have expected murder at least, they decided to refer their difficulty to a third party, and both of them dashed out of the hut to obtain a verdict. The sentry, probably as hungry as I had been an hour or two before, immediately came into the hut and wolfed what crumbs of supper he could find. Then he scowled menacingly at me, tapped his rifle and went outside again to resume his leisurely pacing from the door on one side to the window-opening on the other.

In one corner of the hut I had noticed a kind of locker. I slipped across and opened it. Inside I found fifty dollars in American notes, and these I crammed into my pocket. One of the officers had hitched off his belt before supper, and his revolver holster with it.

Very quietly I took out the revolver and looked at it. It was a weapon, anyway; but what could I do with it now that I had it? My common sense told me that a single shot would bring a dozen men running at once, and that would be the end of me—perhaps without any delay at all. All the same, there were a comforting sort of feeling about it as I held it in my hand.

I crept over to the window. It was a still, lovely night and framed in the rectangular patch beneath



MRS. J. H. SQUIRE

the flap I could see the sky, velvet-dark and sparkling with stars.

I do not think I was more imaginative than most boys of that age, but the sight of that strip of sky gave me a stab. I felt as though I had never really seen the sky and the stars before. I saw them now with a sharpness and vividness that hurt, as though there were all that mattered. And after to-night I should never see the sky and the stars again.

I knew then that the thought was unbearable.

Even now, all these years after, the sudden sight of a night sky sometimes brings back that curious stab to my heart, that same feeling of dreadful urgency and longing.

These people were going to shoot me in the morning. I was not deceived by the rather casual treatment I was getting, for I had seen plenty of that before. To-morrow everything would finish for me. And the sky and the stars would be there again to-morrow . . . but not for me.

My body grew very cold and then hot again. I think I lost my sensation of fear then. In its place there was a kind of tenseness and excitement, a feeling of desperation. Somehow, I must live. *I must live.*

I had no idea, in that instant, what I should do, but every sense was alert. I wasn't a boy any more, I think. I was a creature with nothing to lose, as cunning as a cornered rat. I remember holding my breath and listening to the scrunch of the sentry's feet as he came round again. And then the sound stopped, just outside the window. I heard the scraping of a match and, peeping out, saw him standing

there, lighting the fag-end of a cigarette. His face was partly turned away from me, and the little flame showed up the swarthy profile and cupped hands.

Quick as a flash I raised the revolver and brought the butt down, with all my force, on his head. He dropped without as much as a grunt.

In a moment I was out of that hut and running like mad. It was neck or nothing now, and I knew it. I reached Rio without a challenge, for the second time that evening, and made straight for the docks. An officer coming out of a lighted café saw me, shouted and gave chase, but I outdistanced him.

Turning a corner, I came to a deserted wharf. I looked round frantically for shelter and saw a big empty barrel standing near by. I hopped into it and crouched down.

That barrel had once held fish, and it proclaimed the fact in no uncertain fashion, but it was a sweet enough haven for me. I lay on the bottom of that vile-smelling thing and heard the officer go stamping by in the dark, still searching. Then things grew quiet again and, after a while, I fell asleep.

When I awoke the early sun was slanting across the top of the barrel. For a moment I wondered where I was and what had happened; and then I remembered.

I was due for a personal grave-digging engagement this morning.

I peeped cautiously over the edge of the barrel and looked about. The dock was deserted, and the only thing I could hear was the lapping of the water.

I looked out to sea, and there I saw a boat: the sole moving object in sight. It was some way out, but pulling inshore, and it carried a flag. What the flag was I could not distinguish at this distance.

I strained my eyes, and the boat came nearer. I saw now, to my unutterable delight and relief, that it was flying a dirty Red Ensign: the flag of the British Mercantile Marine. By now I was able to pick out the figures of the rowers and the big man at the tiller, and I could hear the regular beat of the oars.

For the past few minutes I had been shaking like a terrier with cold and excitement, and now I could have shouted with joy. Why I never made that sound I do not know, but it was just as well that I did not, for as I was climbing out of the barrel there was a tramping of feet, and round the corner came the squad with two officers in charge.

For a moment they did not see me, and in that brief, blessed space I leapt across to the edge of the dock. I knew that there was certain death behind me from their bullets; and almost certain death ahead of me from sharks, but I had to risk it. I dived into the water and began to swim, arm-over-arm, towards that boat.

The mate must have seen me go in. At all events, his fellows pulled towards me; but even as they hoisted me over the side I was quaking. Was I really safe? For all I knew he would give me up and I should have to face that firing-squad after all. It was a nasty feeling.

I dropped to the bottom of the boat, a dripping rag of a boy in a foreign uniform, and babbled out

my story, trying to explain quickly what the fuss was about. The mate was obviously surprised to hear me speaking English, but as soon as he got the hang of things his face took on a You-leave-it-to-me expression that did my heart good.

We came alongside to where the Brazilian troops had halted, and the two officers dashed forward, full of words. There was a lot more arm-waving and shouting, with frequent use of the word "*prison-aire*." One way and another the excitement was intense. The mate signed to me to keep well down while all this was going on, but I didn't need any prompting. The mate's name was George Blake and he was a West Countryman, slow of speech and deliberate of manner. A very rock of a man. He was coming ashore that day to rustle up a crew of cattlemen to look after steers that were being shipped home, for this was nearly forty years ago, before the days of cold storage for the English market.

He listened to the palaver for some minutes and then he removed his pipe from his mouth and regarded the gesticulating officers.

"This here boy," he said in his stolid, leisurely tone, "is an English boy, and *that*"—pointing—"is the Red Ensign. He've come aboard my boat, and if you want 'un you'd better fetch 'un." And to add weight to his remarks he produced a huge and ancient revolver and laid it across his knees.

They may not have caught the gist of what he said, but the pointing hand and the revolver made his meaning clear enough. There was another and still wilder burst of talk, but George Blake had had his say, and he just waited.

The officers, with a few more curses and then a resigned shrug of the shoulders ordered the squad to the right about and moved away. I was safe.

I never appreciated till then the wonderful moral suasion of that bit of bunting, though I have seen it work many a miracle since that morning.

Blake left me in charge of a couple of sailors, completed his business ashore and returned with three "Dago" cattlemen, with whom we rowed out to our ship. I told Blake that I was a fully-fledged sailor with two voyages to my credit, and he signed me on at once, giving me five dollars.

Two days later I was homeward bound for England, and I had seen the last of the Revolution. The extraordinary part of it is that I have never discovered to this day which side won—or even which side I was fighting on in that affair.

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Life on that cattle-boat was pretty rough, but I was too glad to be alive to worry about that. The crew consisted of the rag-tag-and-bobtail of South American ports: men who, for the most part, had deserted from other ships in order to join in the revolution, which had looked to them like a good business proposition. But they had discovered the catch in it and were clearing out. Naturally, they could not return to the ships from which they had deserted, as this would mean prosecution and imprisonment. Consequently, when they joined a ship they brought other undesirables with them, and the result can be imagined. The man in the berth above me boasted that he had committed three

murders, and he was gleefully contemplating a fourth as soon as he got back to England. Knowing him as I did, I feel no doubt about his eventual satisfaction on that point.

I found this fellow going through my belongings one night, in search of cash, but I had kept to my old dodge of sewing my money in the tail of my shirt, so he did not find any, I took good care that the shirt never left my back. I had fifty-five dollars now: five I had been paid and fifty I had pinched from the Brazilian officer's locker.

About a week out we struck a hurricane; and that found out the genuine sailormen, if nothing else did. Half the crew were as sick as dogs, but that was not allowed to make any difference. The officers—great fellows they were—routed them out of their quarters to work, and stood over them to see that they did it, with a belaying-pin in one hand and a revolver snug and handy in their belts. One of the dirty swine tried to knife an officer, on one occasion, striking him in the back; but the point of the knife caught a piece of metal of his brace. Quick as lightning the officer turned, bringing his belaying-pin down on the fellow's head with a crash that killed him instantly.

We just flung the body overboard. This time there was no service. The Captain was far too busy fighting the hurricane.

My seasickness was a thing of the past, and I simply revelled in the rough weather. If one can stand it, it is one of the most exhilarating things imaginable. I had been through plenty of gales, but this beat them all. My duties consisted chiefly

of "tricks" at the wheel. I was better at it than many of the crew who were supposed to be capable seamen, and I was quite safe to leave with a given course to steer by.

I worked my hardest for Blake. He was white all through, and I admired him as a man, irrespective of the fact that he had saved my life. But during that voyage we lost him. The cattle were running amok in the hurricane, and he was rushing about trying to secure them, and jumped on a bollard just as a terrific sea came over. He was swept away instantly, in front of my eyes. One moment he was there and the next he was gone, flicked away like a flimsy bit of paper from a polished table.

My first thought, I remember, was: "Now he'll never know I was going to give him that present!" I had meant to buy him a case of pipes as soon as we got to port, to show him that I was grateful. My disappointment and grief were very sharp at the time; but I have always hoped that he understood how I felt about him. Blake's fate was part of the hazard of those who "go down to the sea in ships," and like the sound, dependable man he was, he died doing his job.

CHAPTER V

PART of my work during the voyage had been clearing up the officers' mess, which meant that I had been able to get hold of plenty of good food. I put on weight and grew, and was as fit as a fiddle. Consequently, by the time we reached Liverpool I was very different from the boy who had run away from England two years before.

I was getting a tremendous kick out of being home again, and was anxious to see my mother. With some of my money I bought myself new "slops" and then caught the first train to London. Eventually I reached the house in Wood Green and knocked on the door.

My mother opened it. She stared at me and then gave a delighted gasp and pulled me inside. She was crying now; hugging me and saying, over and over again: "But, my boy! How you've grown!"—after the manner of mothers. Then the old man came in. He was surprised to see me, but non-committal. However, he said; "Er—have a drink, Jack?" which I took to be a definite concession to my manhood. Needless to say, my old fear of him no longer existed.

I stayed at home for a few days, and then I began to get restless again. Shore life, by now, was not much in my line, and I confided to mother that I

wanted to join the Navy. I was too young, of course, but she made inquiries, and a friend of hers told her that my best plan would be to get into the Navy through the medium of the training ship *Arethusa*. So one morning I set out and called at the offices in Shaftesbury Avenue.

It was here that I met one of the finest men I have ever been privileged to know. He was the secretary of the association, H. Bristow Wallen. A life abstainer, a non-smoker and a deeply religious man, he had a breadth of mind which enabled him to be of tremendous use to others, and during the years to come I often went to him, as did many another man, with my troubles and difficulties, assured of advice and help.

I joined the *Arethusa*, and at this point my musical career started in earnest. A fight, incidentally, was the cause of this. One day I saw a lad of about my own age practising the cornet, and his performance aroused my critical faculties. He was already a bandsman, in spite of the fact that his execution, in my opinion, was no better than old Kerryman's. As I listened I found myself simply bursting to do a bit of showing off, so I sauntered up and asked him to let me have a blow. He looked at me very coldly and told me to clear off.

"You go to the devil," I said, with certain embellishments picked up in the forecandle. I added, by way of advice: "And keep your hair on."

At that he put down the cornet and punched me on the nose—*me*, who had been in a war and had stood up to real men! This was too much altogether.

I set to and fairly knocked the stuffing out of him.

He shouted and yelled for help, and the band-master, Mr. Armstrong, came out of his cabin, furious at the din. My opponent was taller and heavier than I, but I had certainly made a mess of him. Mr. Armstrong looked him over and remarked:

"You don't seem to be much good at fighting."

"But a dam' sight better than he is at cornet-playing, sir!" I chipped in.

Mr. Armstrong cocked an eye at me, obviously amused.

"Oh?" he said. "Am I to take it to mean that *you* can play?"

"Yessir. Better than he can."

"Then let's hear you," said Mr. Armstrong.

I gave him my two lucky tunes—"Tom Bowling" and "The Heart Bowed Down"—and the upshot was that I was transferred to the band. Within a few months I was band sergeant and solo cornet player. In fact, not only my naval career, but the whole course of my life was decided by that recital. Soon afterwards a draft was ready for the Navy, and I put my name down; but I was a bandsman all through my eleven years' service.

With regard to music, I found sight-reading an impossibility for a long while, never having had any training. But one day, when I was playing Ganne's *La Czarine* with the sheet propped up in front of me, the "up-and-down" significance of the printed notes suddenly struck me. From that moment I never had the slightest difficulty in reading.

Four of us boys went from the *Arethusa* to the *Impregnable* at Plymouth. We were taken to the Chief Bandmaster's cabin, and there I met another man whose friendship and steady, sensible advice have been helpful to me for thirty-six years: Major Harry Lidiard, now retired.

Lidiard was bandmaster, and only a Chief Petty Officer then, but he was a man of such quality and personality that he was always called *Mister* Lidiard: a prefix to which none below the rank of warrant officer is strictly entitled. To all of us boys he was "The Guv'nor," and I never heard anyone say a single word against him. His great heart and wonderful sense of humour endeared him to all who met him. He turned out some very fine musicians, some of which have since climbed to the top of the tree. Lidiard himself was the first naval musician to rise from the ranks to a commission, and he retired as a Major in the Marines.

Mr. Lidiard passed me and my three companions into the Service subject only to medical examination; and that did not worry either of us since we were all fighting fit. I was not quite fifteen then, but I was keen, and when off duty could usually be found practising the cornet behind the bag-racks on the orlop deck. The *Impregnable*, of course, was a four-decker. James Harding, the band sergeant and my immediate chief, was very good to me, and taught me a great deal.

Many a basin of tea ("plue" in the Navy) and slice of bread and butter came my way through his kindness, and they were very welcome to a growing lad who found the interval between dinner at

11.30 a.m. and tea at 6 p.m. a "perishing hungry stretch," particularly in the winter. There was the canteen available, but sixpence a week total pocket money did not go far towards that.

Discipline was a terrible word in the Navy, forty—and even thirty—years ago. Nowadays the men even get menus with their tea; and the rations include jam and butter, fruit and fresh meat for supper and breakfast. The grub in my time was similar to the grub supplied in Nelson's day. I have actually seen barrels of "salt horse" (preserved beef) with labels on them—"Last examined in 1888"—ten years before they were opened for consumption!

In my view, a change was about due. At the end of the last century the food in the Navy was disgracefully bad and the discipline inhumanly severe. I do not believe that the Service is any less efficient because meals are better and the discipline less brutal and "machine-made."

Nevertheless, one can get used to almost anything, as I found. Life in the training ship was much easier than aboard a man-o'-war, but it was uneventful; and towards the end I found it very monotonous. I was thankful when I reached my eighteenth birthday and was rated a "man," with a man's privilege to smoke and stay on shore on night leave, though the rum ration did not come for another three years. Within two months of reaching this estate I was posted to that historic ship, the *Terrible*, and then I began to learn what discipline really means!

It is no exaggeration to say that it was not possible

for any man to do a year's service without being "crimed" and punished several times. Naturally independent men like myself—who, though not inclined to be insubordinate, liked to do things in an individual way—were constantly in trouble.

The *Terrible's* commander at that time was Arthur Limpus and he was a great fellow, though as strict as tradition itself. A long "defaulters' sheet" was brought to him every Monday morning and, to save time, the Master-at-Arms (George Crowe), used to read it out to him in his cabin while the Commander was shaving.

Nearly all the offences were quite trivial in themselves, and the conversation would run rather on these lines:

Master-at-Arms: "George Robinson, sir. Late with hammock. First offence."

Commander: "Oh, caution."

M. at A.: "John Smith, found leaning against the paintwork. Two previous offences, sir—first 'Caution.' Second, three days' 'Ten A.'"

Comm.: "Then give him five days' 'Ten A.'"

M. at A.: "Tom Barclay. Coat button undone."

Comm. (interrupting smartly, for Barclay is one of the "regulars"): "*Ten* days' 'Ten A.'"

So it would go on all down the list and much valuable time was doubtless saved, for the average "matlo" was far too wise to make excuses for petty crimes, and when asked what he had to say in his defence invariably replied stolidly: "Nothing, sir."

An excuse would have been stupid when the facts were beyond dispute. If you were "crimed" for a button undone, then your button must have been

undone, and that finished it. If you failed to salute the quarter deck in passing; if your bootheels were unpolished, or your hair not cut short enough; if you were unwise enough to lean against the paint-work, you had been caught in the act or you would not have been "crimed."

For a very long period I never finished one lot of punishment before I had incurred another. All my offences were trivial in themselves, but they were certainly "crimes" in the Navy.

One day, I remember, I had fallen in with the other defaulters as usual and, as the Commander came near me, I could see the defaulters' sheet in his hand. On it I read quite clearly, against my own name: "*Seven days' 'Ten A.'*"

As this was before my case had been heard I realised that the Commander, while still chin-scraping in his cabin, had decided upon my punishment.

We stood rigidly to attention and along strolled Commander Limpus with the Master-at-Arms at his elbow.

"Bandsman Squire," said the latter in his parade voice, "came up on deck with a button of his coat undone."

"Anything to say, Squire?" drawled the Commander, according to formula, obviously expecting the usual answer. There was a general jerking to startled attention when my reply came.

"Well, sir," I said, with a show of seemly humility, "it's not much good me saying anything at all."

Poor George Crowe, the Master-at-Arms, here displayed symptoms of collapse. In his twenty years'

experience he had never heard, till then, any variation of "Nothing, sir." Even the Commander was a trifle disconcerted. He gave me an odd look and asked:

"Why not, pray?"

"Well sir," I answered, "I can see that you've already got me down on the sheet for seven days' 'Ten A.'"

Commander Limpus raised the sheet and regarded it in leisurely fashion.

"So I have," he said, in grave surprise. "So I have! But, of course, it's a mistake. It should read '*fourteen* days.'"

He had scored over me very neatly.

"Thank you, sir," I said, "very much."

"Left turn, quick march," said the Master-at-Arms, and I regarded the matter as ended. But it was not, for two days later, as I was on punishment duty, cleaning the brass outside Commander Limpus' cabin, he came out. I sprang to attention and saluted.

"You enjoy a joke, don't you?" he asked.

"Of course I do, sir—even when it's against myself."

"Good man!" he laughed. "Like a bottle of beer?"

"Thank you, sir," I replied, my mouth watering at the thought of it.

"Then go and tell my steward to give you one; and report to the Master-at-Arms that I've cancelled your 'Ten A.'"

I loved him for that; and never did beer taste better, for it was a scorching day. But within a week,

of course, I was back among the defaulters for something or other, and the Commander passed sentence once more with a stony eye.

There may be a certain amount of grouching about the naval discipline of to-day, but the fact remains that I—an intelligent fellow and a good sailor, not looking for trouble—once did *two hundred and sixty-eight days of consecutive punishment!*

This was on the China Station, and among all my offences there was no serious crime. It was "Ten A" all the time: what we called "counting the rivets," and in tropic waters it was no light punishment.

"Ten A" meant that whenever a man would have been normally off duty he fell in for punishment instead, and he was given every tiresome and "dirty" fatigue that happened to be available. There were usually so many defaulters that the fatigues were not enough to go round; consequently, those with no fatigues to do were lined up facing the ship's side, called to attention and then told to stand at ease. There is nothing in the least easy about a naval "standing at ease." You remain with head slightly bent, hands clasped and eyes fixed in one direction, and this attitude must be maintained without the slightest relaxation. All that can be seen is a particular row of rivets, which the defaulter—for want of something better to do—counts over and over again. Hence the term.

Dinner, during punishment, had to be eaten "off the floor" (the deck). The stand-at-ease never changed except that, after one hour, the defaulter was allowed to shift his weight from one foot to the other.

It was certainly punishment!

I did "Ten A" for almost nine months without a break. However, it was easier for me than for some of the others because I was released from punishment, not only for all band work but also for football practice and for boxing, as I was something of a star at both these sports.

My philosophic turn of mind was a great help, too. I found that I could stand there, fixed like a dummy and staring at the side, and still see the humour of life, thank goodness. I used to weave stories to amuse myself, and evolve melodies. In fact, many of the popular numbers I have since composed were conceived while I was "counting the rivets."

In spite of discipline and punishment I enjoyed my life in the Navy, for I was always fit and usually happy. There were grand friendships, too, and I have often thought that there are no friends like the friends one makes in the Service. Life is never quite the same again once a man says good-bye to the sea.

Jack Ventham, who joined the *Terrible* with me in March, 1898, was my particular pal all through the Navy days—and since. The *Terrible* was our first real ship, and we "paid her off," together still, in September, 1902. When I first met him I should say that Ventham was the finest cornet player in the British Navy, and one of the very few who could pass, with flying colours, that difficult test for all cornets: "Home, Sweet Home." He became a bandmaster in due course, but that was not allowed to make any difference to our friendship.

In my time bandsmen in a man-o'-war could add to their meagre pay of one-and-fourpence a day by acting as servants to junior officers and "snotties."¹ The standard pay for this was ten shillings a month and the work was not heavy; no more than preparing your officer's bath, making up and stowing away his hammock, laying out his "rig of the day" and generally valeting his kit. I had three officers to look after when we first commissioned, thus nearly doubling my official pay, to say nothing of the bottles of beer that went down my throat . . . and on their wine bills.

For some months the *Terrible* was engaged in trooping, mostly to Gibraltar and Malta, and I had plenty of fun in both places. One trip stands out particularly in my memory for the finest roast chicken I ever tasted: a chicken which was intended for the dinner of the Civil Lord of the Admiralty of that time—Mr. (afterwards Sir) Austen Chamberlain.

He was going out to Malta with Lord Goschen, then the First Lord, and his staff. The Admiralty chef was also on board, and one night Arthur Kearsley, the flautist, and I, passing by the Admiral's galley, smelt the delicious aroma of roasting chicken. One must live on "salt horse" for a few months in order to appreciate that fully, by the way.

The *Terrible* was one of the first ships to have refrigerators fitted, but they were for the sole use of the officers' mess. It was still "salt horse" for us. On this particular evening the galley door was open and the chef stood over his stove, absorbed in the almost holy rites of cooking. At that time in the

¹ Midshipmen and Cadets.

evening this part of the ship was usually deserted, so Kearsley and I acted promptly. I hid behind the door while he ran to the upper deck and, taking up a bag of ashes, potato peelings and what not, shot the whole lot down over the bald-headed cook.

With a wild curse the victim dashed up the galley, brandishing a steel and looking for the miscreant; but he did not find him. And in the meantime I had opened the oven door, whipped out the chicken and popped it under my coat. It was done to a turn. Before the cook had time to report his loss it had been devoured by the band and the bones thrown over the side. Such is the explanation of one of the minor mysteries of the sea.

It was during this period of trooping that I had my first big gamble. There was a time when I would bet on anything, and up to the final limit of my last bean. Jack Ventham and I strolled into the old *Dreadnought* café at Malta on our first evening ashore, called for drinks and joined the crowd of sailors who were dancing with dark-eyed Maltese girls.

Presently we got bored with dancing and went over to a big table where a "school" of Banker was in full swing, and punted for a while with fair success; and then Jack won the bank. I offered to share it with him, and we held it for nearly two hours, winning close on a hundred pounds between us.

That night we shared the profits on board, but on the homeward voyage, two nights later, I lost the lot in a very "hot" game played on top of the boilers, where a gambling "school" could feel pretty safe from the watchful zeal of the ship's police. Hundreds

of pounds must have changed hands, at one time and another, on top of the old *Terrible's* boilers.

After several voyages with troops, Captain Robinson left the *Terrible* and Captain Percy Scott was appointed in his place. Scott had a great reputation, even then, as a gunnery expert. He had increased it in the *Scylla*, his previous command and, while he was commanding us, he wrote his name indelibly in the annals of naval gunnery. This, of course, was the Sir Percy Scott who died some years ago, a full Admiral.

We did not take much interest in the news, but it was obvious to everybody that there was trouble brewing in South Africa at this time. We were rather scornful of the idea that "old Oom Paul" would ever have the nerve to challenge the fighting strength of Britain, but we were not alone in under-estimating President Kruger and his Boers. We were detailed for the China Station in August, 1899, to relieve our sister ship, the *Powerful*, and we took our "foreign service leave" —a week for all hands, a fortnight for the band; and off we went to say the usual round of good-byes.

When we rejoined our ship we were still not bothering much about South Africa, but on September 24, 1899, the *Terrible* sailed under *sealed orders* with 800 officers and men aboard her. This means that the Captain is instructed to proceed to a certain latitude and longitude before opening the envelope containing final instructions.

Captain Scott's orders were simple. There was to be no China Station for us then. Instead, we were to proceed at once to Simon's Town, the naval base

of the West Coast Fleet, and there report to Admiral Harris, Commander-in-Chief at the Cape of Good Hope.

There hangs on the wall of my home a medal in a glass case, testifying to my small share in the "Natal Campaign." There are no signal victories inscribed on the medal, for the very good reason that none were gained; yet we men of the Naval Division may certainly claim to have done our bit towards the winning of the Boer War.

We shaped our course accordingly for South Africa, calling *en route* at the Island of Ascension and St. Helena. In those days there was no cable between St. Helena and Cape Town, so that when we got there we were just as much in the dark about what was happening as we had been when we left Portsmouth. A rather curious incident occurred here, one of the men, the day we arrived at St. Helena, refusing duty. This was a serious offence, usually punishable with anything from fourteen to ninety days' imprisonment. Scott had the culprit brought before him.

"Do you know," he demanded, "that England may, at this very minute, be at war with a ruthless enemy?"

The man replied that he was thoroughly fed up and didn't much care what happened to England or the Boers either.

"Oh, all right!" said Scott. "Put him below in irons. And look here, my man," he added, "if I find that war is declared when we get to Simon's Town I'll make an example of you, for I'll shoot you on the quarter deck!"

However, this man proved to be lucky, for when we eventually arrived at the Cape we found that war had been declared *the day after* Scott had delivered his judgment. The fellow, in consequence, was not shot, but I believe he was sent home and got about twelve months' hard labour.

Three days after our arrival we heard of the débâcle at Chieveley, where an entire armoured train was captured with all on board it, including Winston Churchill, then, a young war correspondent to *The Morning Post*. Hard upon this reverse came the news of the calamity of Dundee, followed by the disaster of Glencoe. Those were the black days of the Boer War, when the people at home in England were afraid to pick up their morning paper lest they should read news of another British reverse.

There was no more under-estimating the enemy.

CHAPTER VI

IT was soon after this that Buller—General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C.—was appointed to the supreme command, but he arrived to find himself tied hand and foot by “red tape.” Roberts superseded him as Commander-in-Chief, but Buller commanded the entire Natal forces throughout the period of my service.

The appointment of Roberts created quite a sensation in military circles, for it was the first time in history that a Field Marshal had left England to assume command. He asked for—and got—Viscount Kitchener as his chief-of-staff; and Kitchener, who at that time was the Sirdar, left Egypt and got on the same liner: the one that was taking Roberts from Gibraltar to the Cape.

Buller was a great-hearted man, and was almost worshipped by his men. It was his custom to ride down to the front line, smoking an enormous cigar, with only a trumpeter and a single aide as escort, and he would talk to us in the friendliest fashion. He always had a hatred of show, as he had of “red tape” and politics.

Roberts, unlike Buller, had stipulated, before he left England, for an absolutely free hand. He proceeded at once to put his plan of campaign into operation: a plan which led to a series of victories,

the culminating one being the unconditional surrender of Cronjé, with 14,000 men, at Paardeburg. Roberts, as a matter of fact, could have annihilated the whole force three days before he sent his terms to Cronjé, but he had his own reasons for waiting, though the staff did not realise this. He deferred his ultimatum, with the result that Cronjé surrendered *on the anniversary of Majuba*. The Majuba business had marked a black day for the British, so this was a clever and showy move on Roberts' part.

A considerable time before all this our Captain had seen that the Boers could out-shoot us, and it was he who suggested to Admiral Harris the possibility of putting some naval four-point-seven guns ashore on mobile carriages. Harris, who was a real "old woman" type of sailor, was horrified and furious at the "impudence" of the suggestion, but within a week he had to eat humble pie. In the interval Sir George White, besieged in Ladysmith, had sent down to the coast, begging for heavy artillery to cope with the Boers' "Long Toms" and, following that appeal, Scott was allowed to organise his first naval artillery on land with his now world-famous four-point-seven guns.

Curiously enough, it was the crew of our sister ship, the *Powerful*, who used those guns in Ladysmith. Her captain was Hedworth Lambton, afterwards Admiral Sir Hedworth Meux. Lambton landed a naval brigade, doing so—it was hinted at the time—on his own initiative. Admiral Harris wrote lengthy complaints to the Admiralty, but nothing was ever done about it. A few days after these

guns got to Ladysmith the Boers had completely surrounded the town, General French being the last man out. As French left the long siege started.

French, by the way, did wonderful work as a leader of cavalry out there, and never had a single reverse. (A "reverse," of course, is really a defeat, but it is a less disquieting word and, in consequence, a more popular one!)

Boer prisoners soon started drifting through, and were quartered on the *Monmouth*, the depôt ship at Simon's Town. Some of them had never seen the sea before, and had great difficulty in believing that it actually existed. One fellow, on seeing the few ships there, exclaimed in an awestruck tone: "Is *that* the British Navy?"

On being told that there were hundreds of similar and even more powerful ships extant he was visibly overcome and expressed wonder that Kruger should have "had the nerve to take on a war like this."

This reminds me of a somewhat similar story told by some Russians of my acquaintance, *à propos* of the war between Russia and Japan. A peasant on my friend's estate was questioned, when he returned, about the campaign.

"What sort of a country is it?" asked the land-owner.

"Oh, a bad country," replied the man. "All stones. In fact," he added, "*I think the Czar must have bought it without seeing it.*"

Nevertheless, Oom Paul certainly gave us a run for our money, and it took three years to settle the South African business finally.

As a bandsman I served with the Naval Division's

guns in Natal, but we did not score a single victory, with the possible exception of the Tugela Heights battle, in which our artillery played a dominant part. As a general rule our guns barked across the dreary veldt at an enemy we never saw.

For months we lay at anchor off Simon's Town, carrying out deadly-dull routine work under a blazing sun. Then, at last, we got a signal from the Flagship bidding us proceed to Durban, there to land a brigade to assist Sir Redvers Buller in charge of the Natal forces.

Khaki was served out to our landing party, and one bright morning we were all slung over the side in baskets and then towed in barges to the shore, some three miles from where our ship lay. Durban, in those days, was a very awkward place for landing, owing to the furious ground swell. Often we rolled as much as twenty-nine degrees at anchor, and half the crew, including men who considered themselves good sailors, were violently sick.

Captain Percy Scott was appointed Commandant of Durban, which he immediately placed under Martial Law, and the whole of our Naval Brigade entrained for the Tugela, where Buller had his headquarters. We were under the command of Commander Arthur Limpus—the man who had scored over me in the matter of "Ten A."

Our guns completely outranged the Boer armament, and we never caught sight of the enemy at all. At the close of each day would come the order: "Cease fire, No. 4 gun" (or whatever gun it was) and, after that, each crew simply cleaned its gun and settled down to play Nap or Banker

while the battle carried on out of sight, and almost out of hearing. At sunset we all packed up and finally adjourned to the "wet canteen" to yarn with each other and listen to the stories of the various war correspondents who "fought" that campaign with us. I think our favourite among these was René Bull, the artist: a man who had been through all kinds of wars in all sorts of countries, carrying nothing more formidable than a sketch-book and pencil. He was a first-class raconteur.

At Christmas, I remember, General Buller gave every man a packet of cigarettes and every officer a cigar. He may, or may not, have been a good general, but he was a grand officer to work under. Personal danger meant nothing to him, and there was an occasion when he had three horses shot under him in one day.

Christmas passed and Spring came round. Back on the line I found myself among those not required at the front, since there was no work for stretcher-bearers—the bandsmen's usual job in wartime. None of the Naval Brigade was near enough to the fighting line to be in much danger from bullets, so they dispensed with our services. We had not long rejoined the *Terrible* before news reached us of the relief of Ladysmith, and the most enthusiastic celebrations started in Durban, as they did at home. Captain Scott gave a great dinner party on board that night, at which Winston Churchill and his mother, Lady Randolph Churchill, were present, among other celebrities. Winston, taken prisoner at Chieveley, had, in the meantime, made his escape at the risk of his life.

During the dance which followed dinner he lit one of his favourite cigars, drew a few puffs and then laid it down on an ash-tray in order to dance with someone. I was playing in the band, within reaching distance of that ash-tray, and the aroma came up to me in a manner that was particularly provoking. The canteen had just run out of cigarettes.

Not unnaturally, I leaned over and picked it up. That was a very good cigar, as the rest of the band—who all had a share in it—will testify. Winston's expression of bewilderment, when he returned for it, was pardonable but most diverting. I often think of it.

I could tell a hundred stories of the Boer War—from hearsay; but to be quite candid, it was uneventful for me. The biggest kick I got out of it was when I took a Banker bank under the very wheels of our guns and found three consecutive aces for my own share when all the battery was putting the money "thick and heavy." As far as I am concerned my impression of that campaign is best summed up in the words Heat, Dust, Drudgery and Disease.

Soon after the raising of the siege of Ladysmith, when our sister ship, the *Powerful*, was already homeward bound, we steamed from Africa for the China Seas, to which we had been destined before war broke out. Poor Captain Lambton looked a wreck of his former self, and one cannot wonder at it, seeing the privations the whole of the people of Ladysmith had endured.

Our first port of call was the island of Madagascar, and here one thing impressed me tremendously.

Looking over the bows I could see our anchor fast in the sea-floor, showing clearly in sixteen fathoms (ninety-six feet) of water. The sea was like crystal. We did not go ashore, but after coaling we left for Colombo. One might, I suppose, devote several pages to the beauty spots we passed, but the thing which struck me most forcibly was the preponderance of tea-advertisement hoardings, indicating the plantations. I had seen plenty of advertising ubiquity at home, of course, but I certainly had not expected to find it here.

There was shore leave at Colombo, and a blessed relief it was after nearly a fortnight of salt provisions. Here I had one long drive through unsurpassable scenery, but I should have enjoyed seeing more of lovely Colombo during that trip. We coaled and went on through the beautiful straits of Malacca to Singapore, where the British Colony united to give us a special reception. The harbour there is dotted with scores of tiny islands, where alligators bask in the sun. At this time the waters of the cosmopolitan port were fever-stricken, so our scuppers were closed and we had to go out to sea to wash down decks.

Ashore they had prepared a banquet and ball for the entire ship's company, and when we arrived we found that the champagne was contained in huge receptacles, big enough for a man to bathe in. The guests were invited to help themselves, ladling it out in quart pots. In consequence, a strange spectacle presented itself when the ball was over. Fortunately for me, I had a very strong head in those days, so I was able to walk aboard.

Many of the others were past walking. They were carried. The Commander stood at the top of the gangway and watched the casualties arrive.

"Lay them down in rows, *gently!*" he said; and this was done.

I shall never forget the sight of about three hundred sailors, thus deeply sleeping. To make it still more interesting, a tropical storm came up in the night and, as the scuppers were closed, the deck became flooded to a depth of three inches or so. On this the somnolent figures swayed and floated, like lilies on a pond.

When we dropped anchor at Hong Kong, headquarters of the Fleet in the China Station, we learned that another big reception awaited us. My pal, Ventham, and I, mindful of our headaches after the Singapore set-out, decided to limit our festivities on this occasion; so, as soon as the ball started we slipped out to have a look at Hong Kong itself. Our intentions were good but—as good intentions often do—they led to trouble.

We were walking, harmlessly enough, along Queen's Road, the principal thoroughfare, when we heard an outburst of shouting and the clatter of running feet. Jack and I hardly had time to look at one another and say "What's that?" when four blue-jackets came rushing out of a side street with a horde of yelling Chinese on their heels. They fell into the arms of a naval patrol: four men and a petty officer detailed for police duty; and the Chinese, immediately concluding that the whole party of them were in league, went for them all.

The petty officer, spotting us, shouted for assistance, so Jack and I joined in. The Chinese were armed with knives and knobbed sticks, while we had nothing but our fists and boots. We were getting the worst of it, with two men wounded and all hard pressed, but just then reinforcements arrived.

Our allies were huge Sikhs—a section of the Hong Kong police—and they soon turned the tide of battle in our favour. But just when the Chinese mob were on the run and I had decided that the trouble was over one fellow hit me on the head with a stick and raised a lump the size of a pigeon's egg. It did not make me insensible; only infuriated, and I went for him, feinting at his face and bringing my right arm in a short punch right over his heart. He grunted once and went down like a sack.

A Sikh policeman bent over him and examined him. He was stone dead.

I was arrested forthwith and spent the night in jail. Next morning I was brought up before the Magistrates and explained what had happened, my evidence being supported by that of the petty officer of the patrol. It appeared that the man I had hit suffered from a weak heart.

The Magistrates agreed that I had acted in self-defence, but they ordered me to pay ten dollars compensation to the widow. I imagine that this was done in order to placate local prejudice. To my unbounded astonishment the widow came up to me and thanked me volubly in "pidgin" English when she received the money! Her somewhat ambiguous gratitude has caused me many a thoughtful moment since then.

Pidgin English, oddly enough, is the common language in Hong Kong; or it was then. Even the Germans and French spoke it. We had no difficulty, therefore, in making ourselves understood.

After the boredom of the South African campaign I found this trip to China colourful and exciting, for I had always wanted to see the world. As a matter of fact I had visited America again, during my training ship period, but quite unofficially.

I was ill at home one Christmas, and was still ailing when I went back to the *Impregnable*. Incidentally, there was a rather amusing incident connected with that illness. The doctor diagnosed tonsil trouble, and promptly yanked them out—without an anæsthetic. It was a messy and painful job, and he sent me up to the ward afterwards. I knew that I should be there for a week at least, so I asked if I might take my 'cello. Nobody raised any objection; in fact, there was a prevalent idea that it might amuse the other patients.

I think it did, with the possible exception of one fellow who was in rather a bad way: a nervous case of some sort. He just lay there in bed, day after day, saying and doing nothing.

I remember taking my 'cello out of its case one afternoon, in order to play a bit; and suddenly the bridge went down with a bang. Quite a loud bang it was, for the pressure exerted by the strings is considerable. Everybody laughed—except the nervous case. The nurse went over to him and then came back to me.

"Do you know," she said, in a tone of reproach, "*you've sent that patient's temperature up ten points!*"

When I got back to the *Impregnable* again I was still far from robust, after the tonsil affair, and Mr. Lidiard, who was a friend of the doctor, suggested that I should benefit by six weeks' sick leave: so home I went once more.

As chance would have it, my mother's brother, William, was staying there. He had emigrated to America many years before and had become a prosperous builder in Philadelphia. Now he made a yearly habit of a holiday in the Old Country.

Uncle William and I got on well together, and he always treated me with the greatest kindness and generosity. One morning he received a letter with the American stamp, and when he had read it at breakfast he said:

"I must go back—at once."

My mother looked anxious.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked.

"Wrong? No, there's nothing wrong. But there's a fight coming on. Can't miss that." Uncle was a great fight-fan. "It's Corbett and Fitzsimmons, for the heavyweight championship of the world," he added.

My eyes goggled.

"My word! I should like to see that!" I said.

"And why not?" replied Uncle William.

There and then he offered, most handsomely, to take me over and pay all my expenses, and I jumped at it. We booked our passage and sailed in the *Teutonic*, White Star liner: the ship whose first

duty, ten years before, had been to take all the M.P.s round the Fleet to see the Jubilee Review of 1887. In those days she came into the A.1 class, though she was only 9,000 tons.

It was an awful crossing; so rough that everything was battened down, and we lived like rabbits in a burrow. I was in mufti, of course, at the time and, had I but known it, I was breaking the law by leaving England. Happily for me, I did not know it. It was lucky that I had not said anything to anybody about the proposed trip; otherwise I should have found myself in trouble with regulations.

We saw the fight at Carson City, Nevada, on March 17, 1897. It was a great show. Fitzsimmons was a Cornishman; Corbett was an American, a man of education who had started as an amateur. He licked everybody, and finally knocked out the famous John L. Sullivan in twenty-one rounds, thus becoming heavy-weight champion of the world.

Fitzsimmons was middle-weight champion of the world at that time, but it was his contention that it was possible for a middle-weight to beat a heavy-weight. To prove this he challenged Corbett and fought him *as* a middle-weight. Uncle William paid thirty-five dollars each for the seats, I remember, and we were close to the ringside.

Fitzsimmons was a lanky fellow, red-haired and partially bald; about thirty-five years old and weighing a little over eleven stone. Corbett was a couple of inches taller and nearly two stone heavier. The first round was mainly sparring and feinting, and it was obvious that Corbett had taken the measure of his man. Most of Fitzsimmons' punches

hit the air, and Corbett landed one heavy body-blow that could be heard all over the hall.

In Round 2 Corbett, smiling and confident, drove Fitzsimmons all over the ring. Fitzsimmons was very slow but, all the same, Corbett was wary, for he had been warned of his opponent's terrible left. In one of the clinches, as they broke, he staggered Fitzsimmons with a heavy blow to the head and a terrific right to the body. Fitzsimmons countered, but he appeared to make no impression; and in Rounds 3 and 4 Corbett hit him where and how he pleased. In the round that followed his footwork was splendid, and in the 5th he got in a tremendous straight left to Fitzsimmons' nose, and claimed first blood.

In Round 6 Fitzsimmons took tremendous punishment, and it looked like the finish for him, though the constant clinching made the bout, just here, more like a wrestling match. Then 14,000 people bellowed as an upper-cut from Corbett drove Fitzsimmons to the canvas. His seconds shouted at him—and so did Mrs. Fitzsimmons, who was at the ringside; but Fitzsimmons remained on one knee, with Corbett standing by to administer the *coup de grace*. The referee counted:

“ . . . Six . . . seven . . . eight . . . nine——”

And then, amid a perfect frenzy of cheering, he was on his feet again, smothered in blood, but as calm and collected as if he had just stepped into the ring for the first round. Bang went the bell.

In Round 7 Corbett was on the retreat, but Fitzsimmons was still taking punishment. There was one upper-cut in particular, and fresh blood

flew from his now almost unrecognisable face; but still he came on, looking for an opening. In Round 8 Corbett landed one which cut his lip badly, but nothing could stop him. His blows increased in intensity, and time after time Corbett just managed to save himself by smart footwork.

Fitzsimmons seemed to be bleeding all over by now, and in the next five rounds Corbett displayed fine science. There was a lot of clinching, however, and the crowd began to grow impatient. The only interesting feature of Rounds 11 and 12 was the speed of Fitzsimmons, though his blows did not make much impression on his opponent. In Round 13 he got faster than ever, and now he really began to appear the aggressor. Corbett had to use every trick he knew to withstand the onslaught. A points win would have been certain for Fitzsimmons had his other rounds come up to this one. The crowd cheered him wildly; and by now both of them looked as though they had smothered themselves with red ochre, for Fitzsimmons' blood covered the pair of them.

In Round 14 both men gave their best: punch for punch, slogging each other for all they were worth. That round alone was worth the journey across the Atlantic. Then they fell into a clinch, just above the place where I was seated, making shorthand notes. I had promised my father that I would get down particulars of the fight for him.

Uncle William nudged me.

"Look!" he said.

I looked. In the clinch Fitzsimmons was leaning his head across Corbett's shoulder, and he was

actually smiling at the crowd. That smile certainly meant something.

They broke, and he followed Corbett across the ring like a tiger. Corbett, despite the pain of a stomach-blow, fought gamely, and for a time the tide seemed to turn in his favour. One minute it looked like Corbett's fight, and the next it was any odds on Fitzsimmons. Then something happened.

Some say Corbett dropped his guard, though I did not see it; but I was watching Fitzsimmons and I saw him tighten, with a bunching of shoulder muscles. His left hand shot out and crashed home with such force that people in the street outside swore afterwards that they heard it.

He had delivered his famous "solar plexus" punch—then something new to the ring—and Corbett fell. He rolled in agony and was counted out.

Fitzsimmons had won; and he had proved his contention.

Uncle saw me on board the old *Majestic* at New York, and I rejoined the *Impregnable* in good time, with nobody a penny the wiser as to my little jaunt.

I had one of my most gratifying adventures in Hong Kong, though it started in a very innocuous fashion, when I was playing billiards one night in the Hong Kong Hotel.

I only wanted three for a game, and the red was left right in the jaws of the pocket. But as I drew

back my cue to take the stroke it caught the coat of a man who was passing.

I looked round quickly and met his eyes.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the stranger.

I took aim again, but I missed the red and my opponent won. My mind was not on the game now, for I was thinking of that man. He came over when I had finished, apologised again and asked me if I would care to join him in a drink.

On my suggestion we found a couple of chairs in a deserted colonade, and he leaned back and began to talk about himself. He told me that he was the captain of a French mail boat, just in that day. And all the while he was scanning my face in a speculative sort of way.

"You know," he said presently, "I can't place you. I'm sure I've seen you somewhere, though. Any idea where it was?"

I began to enjoy myself.

"Remember Kerryman?" I asked.

His brows shot up.

"Kerryman? Why, yes! The *Queen Anne*. Of course I do. Why——"

"And do you remember the ship's boy—John Squire?"

He gave a great laugh.

"Remember *him*? I should think I do!" He chuckled reminiscently. "I remember giving the little devil the beating of his life, one Christmas Day."

I pushed back my chair and stood up.

"*I know you did, Mr. Herns!*" I said; and staring, he got to his feet.

"I'm that boy," I went on, "and I've waited eleven years for this!" And with that I let him have it.

I beat him nearly to a pulp, and every blow was a joy to me.

I was served with a summons for assault, for Herns couldn't "take it." The Chief Magistrate of the Hong Kong court fined me ten dollars; and he also took occasion to remark that such vendetta-like hatred was devilish.

Maybe it was, but so was my recollection of that dreadful Christmas Day. That bout was worth ten times ten dollars to me. As far as I know, Mr. Herns never showed his battered face in Hong Kong again.

CHAPTER VII

DURING our service on the China Station we were allowed four days' leave, twice a year, in Japan, for health and relaxation. It was a very welcome break and I thought Japan a beautiful country. There is an extraordinary daintiness and cleanliness about it, and everywhere a riot of entrancing colour. On our first visit, however, we found some of the customs strange, and one in particular impressed us, I remember.

There were four of us together, and as soon as we got there we asked for a bath. The manager of the place assured us that this would be provided and very soon we were shown into a room containing four big earthenware tubs, rather like deep hip-baths.

So far, so good; but beside them, looking demure and attentive, were four young women. We expected them to scuttle like rabbits, naturally, when we entered, but they never moved.

I exchanged looks with the man next to me and I could see that he, too, was finding the situation a somewhat delicate one. Neither of us could speak a word of Japanese, much less explain that we thanked them very much, but that now we wanted to get our things off and hop in.

We smiled at the young women and they smiled politely at us; but they stayed put.

"What do we do now?" asked one of the party; and nobody knew. The manager, observing our hesitation, hastened to explain. But did we not understand? The young women were there to assist us in our ablutions. And assist us they did.

This business of baths reminds me of my grandfather, who was a man of ideas. In his day baths were a rarity, even in quite large establishments, but grandfather was much ahead of his time and when he built himself a fine house in Wood Green he installed a bathroom. He was a factory owner and one day, while he was soaking himself, it struck him that baths would be a great comfort and convenience to the hands. He had a couple built in at the factory, with the idea that the men might avail themselves of them on Saturday afternoons, but he kept the whole thing secret until the installation was complete.

Then, with pardonable pride, he displayed the finished work to one of his oldest employees, a man from a village in the West of England.

"There!" said grandfather, throwing open the door. "There are baths for you! What do you think of it?"

"Baths, sir?"

"Yes. Plenty of water. Plenty of room."

"Do you mean, sir," said the man, as one who cannot believe all he hears in this world, "that you get right *into* them things?"

Grandfather explained that such was indeed the custom.

"Feet and all, sir?"

"And all!" said grandfather.

At this threatened breach of personal liberty and established family custom the employee's manner changed at once.

"Then I'm leaving!" he said indignantly. "Man and boy I've worked for you, sir, but I haven't put my feet in water these forty year—and I'm not going to start now!"

Grandfather lost a good workman, but he gained a story which he told, with many chuckles, to the end of his days.

But to get back to China. A queer experience came my way there, though I did not realise its significance at the time. Another man and I were walking on a plain, one late afternoon, outside Hong Kong, when my pal suddenly exclaimed:

"Good Lord, Jack! Look at that! There's a typhoon coming."

I needed no second warning, and we both made a dash for safety. The only possible shelter in sight was a stone building in the distance, so we rushed towards that.

The place looked uninhabited, and when we tried the door we found, to our dismay, that it was securely fastened.

"We must get through the window, that's all," said my pal.

We did so. It was as black as Erebus inside, and we hadn't a match between us.

"Can't be helped," I said, feeling my way round. "We shall have to stay here to-night and make the best of it." And with that I found some sort of

a prop for my head, lay down and went to sleep.

When I opened my eyes and looked round in the morning I saw that we were in a mortuary with about twenty corpses!

Weeks later we learned that all these people had died of bubonic plague. Actually, we came out of the business none the worse, but, had we guessed the truth at the time, we should have had a pretty uneasy week of it. I know I should have, for my pillow had been the thighs of one of the victims.

We had a fortnight or so in Hong Kong and then we were ordered to the god-forsaken port of Wei-Hai-Wei, which was very much in the news just then. It was a flat, miserable island about seven miles long, with nothing on it except a few scattered houses and huts, some tennis courts for the officers and gravel football and cricket grounds for the men. There was also a wet canteen. That was Wei-Hai-Wei, and I still hate the name of the place. By day we were allowed ashore, but we had to sleep aboard. For amusement one could take a walk or one could resort to the wet canteen and gamble; and always it was infernally hot.

Gambling was—and I suppose still is—strictly prohibited in the Navy; but we played furiously and for high stakes. Playing Banker at Wei-Hai-Wei I have lost as much as five hundred pounds in a single session. This sounds rather a tall story, coming from a bandsman whose official pay was one-and-fourpence a day, but the truth is that many a sailor in those days found ways of making money.

It struck me that our canteen was lacking in ideas. Its stock was unoriginal and depressing, and I felt that something ought to be done about it. So I found a small cake shop on shore, and I made a deal with the proprietor. Every afternoon, in time for tea at seven bells (3.30 p.m.) he was to send on board a thousand little fancy cakes, the kind one can buy in any cake shop now at seven for sixpence.

I paid him two cents each for those cakes; and I sold them for five cents each.

Business boomed. I did not even have to take those cakes round. The men queued up for them outside the bandmen's mess and I handed them out as fast as I could, chalking up each man's score against pay day. I sold twenty-eight thousand cakes a month and never made a bad debt. I think that says a lot for the native honesty of the "mat'lo."

In that heat, too, any thirst-quencher—even non-alcoholic—was a sure seller. I noticed that a few rival "traders" were buying limes and selling glasses of lime-juice at five cents a time; but it was hard work, squeezing the limes, and the supply was never anything like equal to the demand. One day on shore I had seen a lemonade machine at work, and so I contrived to import a machine of this kind from San Francisco. It took me six weeks to get delivery, but as soon as it arrived I started business in a big way.

Take essence of lemon, ginger, vanilla and so on, add water to taste and there, complete in bottle, is the drink, with such a machine. I could sell my bottles of assorted "pop" at five cents (about

a penny), and the cost to me was barely a tenth of this. On an average I sold three hundred and fifty bottles a day, and a thousand a day when we were coaling. The machine, a second-hand, reconditioned bargain, cost me twelve pounds, and I went on trading briskly with it for nine months.

Consequently, I was able to put a nice, tidy packet in the ship's bank. A business man was lost in me.

Yet was it, I wonder? Money always slipped through my fingers. Sometimes I made a lot at cards, and sometimes I dropped a lot. On the whole my luck broke fairly even, but, when we were back in Hong Kong, I lost nearly a thousand pounds during a race meeting and was back almost where I started. However, I regarded it all as part of the game and took it philosophically. I went on trading.

Three or four days later the Commander happened to be walking along our mess deck out of working hours—an unusual occurrence, for a senior officer seldom visits the lower deck except upon official occasions. He saw my machine and promptly ordered me to come before him next morning after defaulters' parade. I was not officially "crimed" over this business, but the Commander was rather frosty about it and told me, curtly enough, that in future the canteen would have its own machine. I was to take mine ashore at once.

"Where are these things obtainable, by the way?" he added.

I did some quick thinking and gave him the address of a man I knew ashore. Then, at the first

opportunity, I went ashore myself and took the machine along with me. I saw my friend and we had a few words together, during which I gave him some interesting private instructions.

A few days later, on defaulters' parade once more (it may have been another button undone, or it may have been "failing to salute the Quarter Deck" this time), the Commander stopped me just as we were dismissed. His manner was complacent.

"You may be interested to know, Squire," he said, "that the canteen has one of its own machines now. Damned expensive, those things. That fellow you mentioned charged me a thousand dollars for it."

"Yes, sir," I replied, "I know. He told me when he paid the money over."

"Paid the money over? What money? For what?"

He had just given me ten days "Ten A," and the present situation appealed to me strongly.

"Well, sir," I said, "that was my machine you bought."

He appeared to swallow something large.

"How much did you pay for it?" he demanded.

"Sixty dollars, sir, second-hand from San Francisco. It's in pretty bad condition now, I'm afraid."

The Commander seemed incapable of further remark just then, so I saluted and walked off.

Two days later the machine gave out for good, and the Commander sent for me and demanded the canteen's money back. I was polite but firm.

"Pardon me, sir," I said, "but I didn't sell you

a lemonade machine. My agent sold it you, but I think I am right in saying that no guarantee was asked or given."

Naturally, after that he had me up before Captain Scott.

The Captain heard both sides without a smile. The Commander pleaded the trafficking regulations, but Scott replied that they could not be taken literally. If they were, then the barber would not be allowed to charge for hair-cuts, and spare-time tailors and washermen, whose trade was sanctioned by long custom, would all be law-breakers.

"The fact is," he added quite pleasantly, "I don't think the canteen ought to go into competition with—er—private traders. Case dismissed."

The canteen-committee passed a vote of censure on the Commander for ordering the machine and paying for it without their sanction! That, I fancy, was the "unkindest cut of all."

Six weeks after we had returned to Hong Kong the Boxer Rising started, and we were soon on active service again. People at home had been worked up over the Boer War, but China, more than ten thousand miles away, seemed almost too remote for their interest; yet while it lasted it was one of the bloodiest campaigns in history—especially naval history. The Boxers were members of one of the great Chinese secret societies, and their ambition was to banish "foreign devils" from the Celestial Land altogether. From their point of view this was an understandable ambition, perhaps, but it took an appalling form. They began in a small

way by murdering a few missionaries, but the affair began to assume international proportions when they assassinated the German Ambassador in Peking.

Following this political murder the Kaiser, reviewing some troops then leaving Berlin for China, told them to "behave like the Huns of old." This, I believe, was the origin of the epithet with which all Germans were labelled during the Great War of 1914-1918. As a matter of fact, he was justified in giving that advice, for the Boxers were fiends incarnate, and any poor fellow who fell into their hands could pray for nothing but a swift death. Not that he got it, as a rule. One officer, Captain Beyts, Royal Marines, originally of the Flagship *Centurion*, was taken prisoner by them, and we heard that he suffered the torture known as "the thousand deaths."

The victim lives a long time under this particular agony. He is spread-eagled face upwards on the ground, and then the executioners work on him with knives, cutting away everything (including the eyelids) that will not unduly hasten the end. The wounds are then seared with hot irons, but great care is taken not to injure a vital part. The mutilated and still conscious body is then left in the open for the vultures to devour. The whole thing is unbelievably diabolical.

As a stretcher-bearer in Tien-Tsin I actually saw the remains of some of our prisoners who had perished in this way. I could not describe the horrors, even if I wanted to, but I went back to barracks determined to give no quarter to the enemy in any circumstances. Admiral Sir Hobart

Seymour, Commander-in-Chief of the China Station, 1897-1900, gave us orders to shoot our wounded when we embarked on the famous retreat, but luckily the relief column came through in time, and we were spared that grim duty. No man among us, I am sure, would have hesitated to fulfil it, had the need arisen.

When we finally got to Peking we discovered that the French, who had suffered the most from Boxer atrocities, had cornered about a thousand in a cul-de-sac and played a dozen machine-guns on them until nothing was left but a mass of dead and dying, all heaped together.

Bandsmen, when they went ashore on expeditions, were used primarily as stretcher-bearers. The *Terrible* then conveyed us to Taku, and we of the band landed, with most of the rest, to join the Naval Division under Admiral Seymour's command. We marched into Tien-Tsin, a city of teeming millions, besieged by the Boxers, but held officially by the international forces. Barracks were hastily improvised, and here I served through the greater part of this fantastic campaign.

There was constant street fighting in Tien-Tsin itself. Snipers fired from upper windows, and in any skirmish no one knew on which side the mob would fight. I have a medal for that campaign, but I do not claim to have been engaged in the heat of the fighting. Once, I remember, I doubled out into the streets with my Number Two to pick up casualties after a street affray, and we found a young officer, with a bullet wound in the chest,

bleeding and unconscious. We brought him back to barracks.

He was Lieutenant-Commander Beatty, who lived to become the most famous naval figure in the Great War.

Finally, we moved on to Peking, the Boxer rising having been suppressed. Looting broke out here, and for about forty-eight hours there was no attempt to stem it. People were helping themselves all over the place, stuffing valuables in pockets and haversacks. I have never seen such an orgy. Soldiers and sailors of all nations were looting-mad. The antique shops of Europe, it is said, took ten years to dispose discreetly of the treasures that were stolen, during that period, from palaces and noble homes. Men staggered about, absolutely weighed down with "swag."

My share was one great pearl in a golden casket, which I found in Prince Tuan's Palace, when I swept in with the other troops. I knew too much to burden myself with heavy stuff, remembering how far we were from our base—and remembering the heat. The pearl and casket together were no bigger than a cigarette case.

The Chinese at that time stored most of their wealth in heavy shoe-shaped nuggets of gold and silver, and these formed a large part of the loot. But on our way back to the base the track was strewn with them, littered with priceless pieces of jade and all sorts of treasures thrown away by exhausted men.

Never shall I forget that journey. We had to do over two hundred miles with the sun blazing down

and the heat coming up off the road like a blast from hell. Bit by bit every scrap of weight that could be shed was thrown away. We staggered on for what seemed like centuries of torment, our eyeballs lacerated by dust; speechless, almost senseless, some of us. If a man halted, then the man behind lurched into him, sightless and stupefied, preoccupied only with the need to keep going, to stand up somehow on his agonised feet. Even boots were abandoned by some of the blue-jackets, who trudged along on bare, bleeding soles.

Men whom one might have thought accustomed to intense heat gave up and fell out: big Sikhs, reared under the glare of the Indian sun, collapsed. But the dogged endurance of some of the men was extraordinary. Little wiry chaps from London and Lancashire just kept on moving, hour after hour, sticking it out to the last. If ever I saw British pluck I saw it then!

I hung on to my pearl in its casket, and when we eventually reached Hong Kong I sold it to a native dealer for five hundred dollars. Less than three weeks later I saw it offered for sale in the window of the same shop for fifteen thousand. And when I thought of that trek I felt that it was worth it, whoever got it.

Looting, as a matter of fact, might have proved the end of me on one occasion. It was, of course, punishable by shooting on sight. No court martial was considered necessary in such a case; the offender, if caught, was simply shoved against a wall and the rifles of the patrol did the rest. Three of us, suffering from boredom one night in Pekin, decided to go

out on a loot, with a certain jewellery store in view. We planned it with considerable finesse, and were very hopeful about the "pickings." It was a risky project, but the need for some sort of excitement had become urgent.

We got there all right and, at the point of a revolver, "held up" the unfortunate proprietor. The idea was that one was to keep the old chap covered, a second was to gather up the goods, and I was to watch at the door. Everything was going according to plan when, to my horror, I saw a small body of men come round the corner of the street. It was the patrol, fondly thought to be miles away.

I warned my two pals, who immediately forced the old fellow down behind the counter, threatening him, in pidgin English, with instant annihilation if he gave as much as a squeak. That was good as far as it went, but we might still cause the patrol some wonder by our presence in the shop, I decided. And then the idea came to me. I took my own watch from my pocket and opened the back of it. When the patrol came in I was leaning against the counter, interestedly examining the works.

"Buying a watch?" asked the petty officer in charge, so disarming was my appearance.

"No," I answered, feeling a little damp under the hair. "No. I've got a bit of dirt in mine, but the old Chink here says he can fix it for me in a couple of minutes."

He nodded.

"These Chinks are damned clever," he observed.

"Damned clever!" I agreed, offering him a cigarette. He accepted it.

"I'll smoke it when my relief comes along in ten minutes," he said. "Thanks. Well—so long!" And he strolled out of the shop, taking the patrol with him.

That was a near thing. We came away without any pickings; and that was how I lost my taste for looting. I never tried it again.

Looting, as it happened, was not the only way of "making a bit" just about that time. There is a curious story in connection with that, and I do not suppose it will do anybody any harm if I tell it, since the people concerned in it are all dead, most probably, by now.

A large sum of money had been sent out in specie to pay the troops, and it was being hoisted out of the ship in a big crate. Suddenly the chain of the crane snapped, and down went thousands of sovereigns, to the bottom of the sea. The water was so shallow here that we had to anchor about fifteen miles from shore; so orders came from the Flagship that divers were to be used to try to recover the money. This attempt at salvage was started, and divers worked in relays, but the result was so dissappointing that the proceedings were abandoned. The amounts recovered were not sufficient to justify the time and expense of the diving party, and the incident was officially closed.

Years after I happened to enter a certain smart saloon bar in England, and there was an instant and mutual recognition between me and the elderly proprietor. He had been one of the salvage party.

I remembered then that on our arrival in England, years ago, he and a few others had purchased ~~then~~

discharge; and now I learned that all of them had set themselves up in business *with money from the bottom of the sea*.

The temptation, of course, must have been overpowering. It was so easy to secrete a few sovereigns in one's hand two or three times a day for a couple of months. It would have spelt about ten years' imprisonment if they had been caught, but they were not. I suppose they told themselves that it meant no individual harm to anybody: only a slight slip-up in the naval estimates. After the looting and the general undermining of accepted codes in that sanguinary campaign it might be unfair to judge these men. I, at least, have never done so!

The life in Hong Kong was monotonous to a degree. On board all day, and then the liberty boat at 4.30—if one had any money with which to go ashore. The Hong Kong Hotel or Thomas's Grill Rooms for dinner, followed by cards and billiards, and then back to the ship by the midnight boat. No change; no particular interest. But at last there was a rumour of a move, and when, at last, the paying-off pennant was flying from the mast we knew that we were under orders for home. Tradesmen flocked to the ship to get their accounts squared up; and though there is a saying in the Navy that "the first turn of the screw pays all debts" I do not think the *Terrible* left a bad reputation behind her in China.

The forecastle was a miniature Zoological Gardens, a pandemonium. Hundreds of parrots had been

hastily purchased as souvenirs for relatives in England, and the din was remarkable. So was the general excitement, for only those exiles who have spent years on foreign service can imagine what we all felt like. It was a sort of "breaking-up day" on a gigantic scale. On the last morning eight hundred men yelled with joy when the signal from the Flagship came over:

'TERRIBLE will leave China Squadron tomorrow morning 10 a.m. and proceed to Portsmouth to pay-off. The Admiral wishes Captain Percy Scott, the officers and men a pleasant voyage and a happy well-earned leave after the most eventful commission in modern naval history.'

CHAPTER VIII

IT was our last night ashore, and I had made up my mind that it should be a quiet one. Jack Ventham and I, full of good resolves, stepped into the liberty boat and—for once—we kept them.

We dined in the Hong Kong Hotel, bought a few more curios for the folks at home and were back on board by eleven o'clock. Ventham, being a petty officer, was exempt from inspection, but I, being merely a rank and file bandsman, had to stand to attention while the Officer of the Watch looked me over.

I imagined that everything was satisfactory, but, to my astonishment, he suddenly exclaimed:

"This man's drunk!"

The charge was so unfounded that I forgot the ancient Navy custom of saying nothing.

"Beg pardon, sir," I burst out, "but I'm not!"

The officer ignored this and, turning to the ship's corporal, ordered him to put me below. At that I asked, as any man was entitled to do under such a charge, to see the doctor.

"Very well," said the officer curtly, still addressing the corporal. "Take him to sick bay for inspection."

The sick bay steward was a pal of mine, and when at last the doctor arrived on his nightly round, he explained that I was a bandsman who wished to be tested for alleged drunkenness. The doctor was an Irishman and a rigid disciplinarian, and he put me through a severe test: walking the chalk line, repeating difficult phrases and reading the eyesight testing board. I came through it all, of course, without any difficulty.

"The man's not drunk at all," said the doctor. "What fool said he was?"

"Begging your pardon, sir," the corporal explained, "but it was the Officer of the Watch."

"Phwhat?" exclaimed the doctor, who always became noticeably Irish in a crisis. "The Officer of the Watch, indade! Well, if *he* says you're drunk, my man, then it's drunk you are, and that's all about it. Put him below, Corporal!" And below I went.

I was released next morning to take my place with the rest of the band on the poop. Amid cheers from all the Fleet, and to the accompaniment of thousands of crackers let off from the Chinese boats we steamed slowly down to the harbour's mouth to the tune of "Rolling Home to Merrie England."

But we were still not far from shore when the bugle-call for defaulters was sounded, and I had to take my place in the old familiar line. I told myself that it would mean, at most, fourteen days' "Ten A," and I should be able to get ashore at Colombo for a day or two.

The limit of punishment that may be inflicted by the commander of a warship is fourteen days

"Ten A," which is not considered serious enough to blemish one's yearly conduct certificate. Anything above that is given by the captain, who awards cells and imprisonment up to three months. More than that constitutes a court martial.

The Master-at-Arms (good old George Crowe) explained my case in my favour, but the Commander—in my opinion—had a permanent "down" on me. Instead of giving me the anticipated ten or fourteen days' "Ten A" he said, very curtly: "Put this man back for the Captain."

I was so enraged that I could almost have struck him. I knew that I was innocent, but I knew the Navy too, and I expected the worst. It looked like queering my discharge papers.

Two days later "Captain's defaulters" sounded, and I fell in with a dozen other men to await the judgment of Captain Percy Scott. I was nearly last on the list, and it struck me that Scott was in a curious temper that day: not exactly ill-humoured, but sardonic.

My turn came and Scott listened to the evidence against me, and then asked what I had to say in my own defence. I told him the whole story of the accusation, the passing of the medical test and—here I fancied I saw the beginnings of a smile on the Captain's lips—the blamelessness of my time ashore, with Jack Ventham ready to say that during the whole evening we had had nothing more than three beers apiece.

"Ah!" said Scott. "You know, don't you, that according to regulations a man is either drunk or

sober? There's no half-way stage. Very well. If you were drunk you'll be punished; if you were sober you'll go free. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, not suspecting the trap he had set for me.

"Then you admit you took a certain amount of alcohol. In that case, were you in exactly the same condition *after* the beers as you were before? Because, if you were not, then—according to the regulations, which you have just admitted—you must acknowledge that you were drunk."

This was a poser, to be sure. I saw a glint in his eye, and I felt that he was amused by the situation: amused, but relentless, all the same.

"Excuse me, sir," I said, "but may I put a parallel case before you decide on mine?"

"Certainly. I'm here to give you every chance."

"Thank you, sir. Well then, touching this alcohol question." I hesitated. "But my case may sound impertinent, sir."

"That's all right. I'm broad-minded."

"Well, last guest night in the ward-room, sir, wouldn't you have taken at least a couple of glasses of wine? And wine has more alcohol in it than any Hong Kong beer. . . . So you see, sir, if anybody said *you* were drunk. . . . If you were, sir, I wouldn't grumble at my punishment."

For a moment he looked at me with real anger, and then his expression relaxed.

"Yes, your parallel case *is* impertinent," he said. "But it's damned clever. Case dismissed."

However, I kept out of the Commander's way

for the rest of the voyage home. And I finished it without a single "crime."

The time dragged insufferably. We were steaming at about ten knots an hour, but eventually we got to Suez. There was great excitement at this stage, both on board and with the Suez Canal authorities ashore, for we were the biggest ship (14,200 tons) to have attempted the canal passage up to that time. Everything portable had to be taken out of the ship and packed into the boats which were, in turn, towed through the canal by picket boats. All the surplus coal, tons of it, was thrown overboard; but even when we had lightened her by every possible means it was said that she was only four inches off the bottom in some places, and it was touch-and-go, with a possibility that we might have to load up again and make for home round the Cape of Good Hope.

The next day we arrived at Port Said, where 3,000 tons of coal had to be got on board. Coaling ship in the Navy was a rotten job in those days: rotten for everybody, but especially for the musicians. According to regulations the band is supposed to enliven things by playing at intervals, but when we were not acutally playing we were pumping up drinking water, getting provisions from the refrigerators for the officers and preparing baths for them when coaling was finished. I loathed coaling, as did everybody else.

Two days later we left for Malta, only to find that nobody was allowed on shore. We had just

come from a fever-stricken port (Port Said) and Malta had not forgotten a previous scare, when a plague was brought ashore by a ship's crew. Even the mail was passed out in long-handled boxes and disinfected before posting.

Just over a week later, at about 11.30 in the morning, a yell went up, and all hands crowded to the sides of the ship. We could see the first English land sign: the Eddystone Lighthouse. In another hour or so our ship dropped anchor inside the breakwater at Plymouth. Harbour officials came aboard with mail and dispatches, and I saw, once again, the familiar figure of Mr. Lidiard who, in his capacity as Chief Inspecting Bandmaster of H.M. Navy, was there to inspect the instruments, music, etc. In his usual friendly fashion he took me ashore for the evening, and over a good dinner we revived old memories.

There was one story of my training ship days which he always enjoyed telling against me. It relates to a day when, practising in my favourite spot behind the bag-racks, I discovered a small leak in my cornet.

The two men to whom I might have reported this were ashore, so, mustering up my courage, I peeped into Mr. Lidiard's cabin. He was alone and, looking up from his work, he said: "Hullo, sonny! What is it?"

A difficulty immediately presented itself to me. This was the first time I had ever spoken to the great man, and I felt that it behoved me to be genteel.

"If you please, sir——" I began; but there I

stopped. For the life of me I could not bring myself to utter the plebeian word "hole."

"If you please, sir, there's a . . . a . . . an *aperture* in my instrument."

For an instant he regarded me suspiciously, scenting a "leg-pull," and then he shouted with laughter. He laughed again that night, recalling my singular effort to achieve refinement. But I, in my turn, recalled a story against him. It is one which serves to show how an incident which, in civil life, might be quite trivial, assumed quite dreadful importance under the strict discipline of the Navy.

The inspecting captain whose headquarters were on the *Impregnable* was, at the time of this incident, a lover of music and a man who took a great interest in the band. One day he sent for "The Guv'nor" and said he would like to inspect certain double bass-covers that were down for renewal.

As it happened, one of these was ashore. A double bass player, having an engagement, had been given permission to take his bass ashore in one of these covers, and had forgotten to bring it back. There was no time to send for it, and an explanation of the circumstances would have resulted in punishment for the player. Mr. Lidiard—how like him!—wanted to avoid this. He had given permission, and he felt, therefore, that he was to blame for what had happened. To be sure, he gave the player a hell of a dressing-down afterwards, but that was another matter. If there was to be any row now it must be strictly limited to himself and the inspecting captain. This was no small gesture on his part, for, discipline being what it was then,

the inspecting captain would have been perfectly justified in laying a charge against Mr. Lidiard for pilfering Government stores; and that might have meant reduction to the ranks and possible imprisonment. The Guv'nor knew this well enough, but he was trusting to his ingenuity to find a way out.

I was one of those detailed by our band sergeant to help carry the covers up to the captain's room. The sentry knocked on the door and announced:

"The Chief Bandmaster, sir."

"Oh," said the captain (Captain Pelham Aldrich), "come in, Mr. Lidiard. Have you come about those covers?"

"Yes, sir. I've got them outside."

"All right. Bring them in."

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Lidiard, "you had better see them one at a time, sir. Otherwise they'll make such a mess of your clean room."

"A very good idea," agreed Captain Aldrich affably.

"Now, bring in that first cover," ordered the Guv'nor, speaking to me outside. I entered and spread the bass-cover for inspection.

"Yes, I think we'll replace that one," nodded the Captain.

"Next cover!" said the Guv'nor; and another duly appeared. Just then Mr. Lidiard was seized with a violent fit of coughing and, hurriedly apologising, came outside the cabin for a moment.

"Squire," he said in a whisper—now miraculously cured of his cough—"when I call for number four

cover you bring the first one in again. You understand?"

I understood; but he was taking a big chance, and we both realised it. Presently he called out: "Number four cover!" And with complete solemnity and self-possession I marched in again and spread out the first one.

"Well," said the Captain, "I think that will do, Mr. Lidiard."

I saw a look of immense relief spread over the Guv'nor's face; but he wasn't out of the wood yet.

"Perhaps," added Captain Aldrich, "I'd better see them all together. Bring the lot in."

It was a nasty moment; but the Fates, evidently, were on the side of Mr. Lidiard, for at that crisis the telephone on the Captain's desk rang.

"Never mind, Mr. Lidiard," he said, picking up the receiver. "It doesn't matter. I've got an important call coming through."

We got down to the cabin, and here the Guv'nor—the most temperate of men—poured himself out a double ration of rum and drank it neat. Perspiration was streaming down his face; and mine wasn't as dry as it might have been.

My estimate of Mr. Lidiard's cleverness went up several more points that day. I told him so, over that dining table at Plymouth.

I stopped on shore till the next morning, when I reported on board. We were now on the last stage of our journey, heading for Portsmouth.

And now, as ill chance would have it, we encountered a terrific gale—and that after seven

weeks and four days with scarcely a ripple on the water!

A racing skiff, I am sure, could have done that journey from China without shipping a bale-full of water; but at this stage of our voyage I really began to feel scared. There were times when I wondered if we were all going to be drowned, and almost within sight of home. I think a lot of us wondered that. To increase our discomfort we were making a compulsory speed trial, too. However, I managed to fall asleep in my hammock, and when I awoke in the morning things were quieter. We slipped into our berth alongside the south railway jetty with everybody in fine fettle and the band playing "Home, Sweet Home."

Wives, sweethearts and friends poured on board, laughing and crying, and some of the reunions made a lump come into one's throat. It was a wonderful sight.

No sweetheart was there to meet me—for the very good reason that I did not possess one. So, "clicking" for immediate leave, I took the next train to London.

How good it was to see and smell that place again! My sister and my old friend William Harris were at the station to meet me, and then I felt that I was really at home again.

Willie Harris had been at school with me, and he had never forgotten me. Having kept in touch with my sister all this time he had been able to get news of me now and then, and I knew as soon as I set eyes on him that he was the same Will. He was an exceptionally bright fellow always, and

later on he became known to thousands of newspaper readers as "Pharamond" of the *Referee*. At school he was a monitor, but he was never above going round with me, his junior.

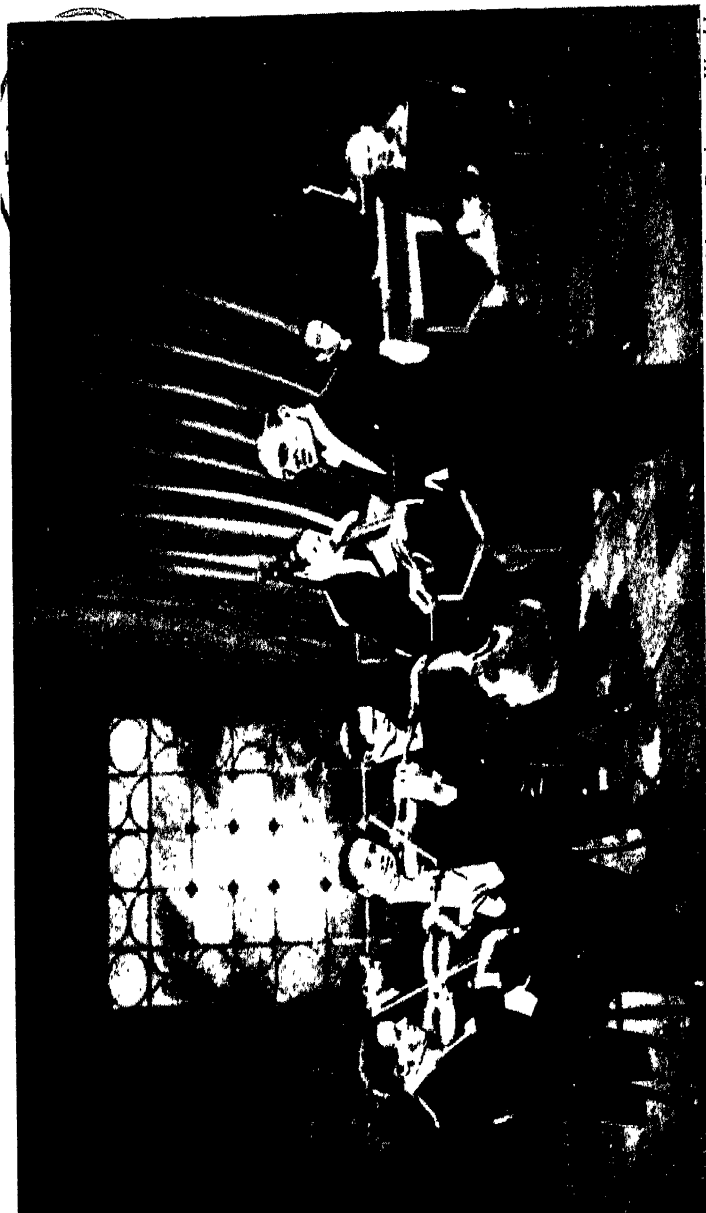
On one occasion, I remember, he saved me an extremely painful embarrassment. We had been fence-climbing somewhere on a Saturday afternoon and I tore such a rent in my trousers-seat that the problem of getting home without ribald comment—or worse—looked insuperable. Will walked round me, assessed the damage and gave the matter some thought.

"I tell you what, Jack," he said. "You walk on looking as though nothing had happened—if you can—and I'll keep close behind you. I dare say we can manage that way."

We managed admirably and the journey was accomplished without incident, though I cannot help thinking that the spectacle of the pair of us progressing in this erratic fashion must have impressed onlookers.

At Liverpool Street I had my first sight of a motor car. I still recall the queer impression that perched-looking horseless carriage gave me. It had an irresponsible appearance and, from what I remember of the early cars, that appearance in no way belied them.

It is curious to think that my own lifetime has seen such extraordinary changes and discoveries. Any man or woman near the fifty mark has, as it were, two lives. I very much doubt if the younger generation will see the metamorphoses we have seen, what with radio, aircraft and mechanical



Photo, Pathetone Weekly

THE OCTET MAKING A "TALKIE" SHOT FOR THE PATHÉ GAZETTE

transport. Things that are a commonplace to my own children nowadays would have been a miracle—or a scare—to my parents.

I find it difficult, in fact, to recapture any satisfactory mental picture of what the world was like when I was a boy. I remember incidents, as I have shown, but the "local atmosphere" is foggy. The narrow, dusty roads, the slow journeyings. Indeed, it was quite a common thing to miss seeing a famous view or building fifteen or twenty miles from one's home because of the difficulty of getting to the place, and the discomfort it would entail.

Then there was the dearth of amusements. One wonders nowadays what on earth people did with their leisure. As a rule they read long books (the three-volume novel was still in vogue when I was a boy), and gave parties for each other: chiefly musical parties. Good music, needless to observe, was at a premium. Plenty of folk never heard any that was worth hearing. Two houses out of every three—I should judge—had a piano, and the evenings were hideous with the eldest daughter's janglings. Practically every child, however unmusical, was made to "learn the piano," in order, one presumes, to fill in those gaps that awaited it in adult life. People turned up to tea or supper with a pile of songs and "morceaux de salon" under their arms, and there was no escape for anybody.

But this sort of thing had its advantageous side too. If talent was there it came out. Everybody at least had a try.

The coming of aviation frightened and shocked some folk quite badly. I think they fancied there

was something obscurely blasphemous about it. One old lady said to me:

"If the Almighty had meant us to fly He'd have given us wings," and the news of an air disaster brought forth an outburst that was almost gratification. One day she had been going on in this strain for some time, and I said to her:

"By the way, your daughter Carrie has a bicycle, hasn't she?"

"Yes, she has," she answered. "Why?"

"Well!" I said.

"Well what?"

"Well, in that case she's going in the face of Providence every time she pedals down to the post office or the grocer's. I don't suppose she was born with a bicycle attached. Not for a moment."

The suggestion, evidently, was a painful one to the lady in question, for she shut up at once.

It is certainly very strange to be able to recall personal experiences of this sort. In another twenty years or so, I have no doubt, such stories will seem like tales of the Middle Ages. Even now, when I sometimes talk to the youngsters about the old conditions I can see them looking at me with the kind of expression they might wear for a Rip Van Winkle or a personification of Old Father Noah. They believe me, but entirely against their better judgment. But we are lucky, we folk of the transition period. We are quite at home with all these innovations, and yet we have not entirely lost that agreeable sense of wonder.

The world seems to me a better place than it was. I can remember when Saturday nights meant

an orgy of drunkenness in most towns and villages, for the simple reason that most of the folk who went in for that pastime did so for want of a better. Now they go to the "pictures." And however much one may complain about the everlasting radio and gramophone noises, they are at least no worse than that piano-banging once in vogue, at their lowest possible estimate.

In the old days a barrel-organ in a village caused almost as much excitement as a visit from Royalty. Now, for the price of a gramophone and a few records, people can enjoy some of the best music in the world. In my view that is an important addition to modern life and education. No place is too isolated to benefit by it, and I think I am right in saying that anything which improves individual taste improves the entire individual outlook.

But to get back to Liverpool Street. I stared my fill at the motor car and then we hurried on to my home at Leytonstone where my parents were then living. Mother was waiting for me, of course.

She opened the door to us and, like the folk who had come on board, she laughed and cried all at once, bless her dear heart. The old man, too, seemed genuinely pleased to see me again.

There was a slap-up tea ready for us, and afterwards I unpacked my things and brought out the various gifts I had accumulated for my friends during those years of absence. For mother I had a piece of embroidered silk, quite a handsome affair, and she cried again when I gave it to her.

"It's lovely, dear," she said.

"As long as you like it it's all that matters," I assured her. I had brought it home in the masculine belief that she would "make something of it," but I never saw it about the place afterwards. I did not ask her what had become of it, thinking that perhaps I had erred somewhere on that delicate question of colour or suitability. Naturally, I forgot all about it; but after her death, many years later, I was surprised and touched to find it among her treasures, carefully wrapped in tissue paper and bearing a little ticket with the date of my return written on it in her scholarly hand. Then, if never before, I realised what a red-letter day that had been for her.

For Pharamond there was a cigarette case with Chinese carving on it, and he kept it as long as he lived. He showed it to me, years after, when he visited me in my dressing-room at the Victoria Palace, where the Celeste Octet made its first bow to a music hall audience.

The *Terrible's* commission had lasted for four years and seven months, including active service in Natal and China. Though I had been with her throughout it happened that my name was still borne on the *Impregnable's* books, so I had to go to Plymouth to pay off.

In spite of the money I had made at various times and in sundry ways I paid off with exactly one pound and a warrant for my journey back to London via Plymouth. Altogether I had three-pounds-fifteen in the world when I got into the train again; and then six of us started a game of Nap. My luck was extraordinary, and the game

was still going strong when we got to Portsmouth. We all adjourned to a pub. and there we went on playing. One of us would drop out now and then for a couple of hours' sleep, but we ate where we sat. The session continued for three days and two nights, and during that whole time there was no quarrelling or even a sign of temper from anybody.

The game eventually broke up when one man rose, yawned and remarked: "Well, boys, I think I'll chuck it now. I've lost fifty quid."

But my luck had held, and I won £185 15s. I said "good-bye" to all my pals, took the train to London, fell in with some poker players . . . and lost every bean before I reached Waterloo.

I had fifteen weeks' leave to face, and the prospect did not look too good. But once again a cornet came to the rescue, and I got deputy night jobs in theatre and music hall orchestras. I made enough to keep me in pocket money, and when I reported back for duty on the *Impregnable*, to do the twelve months' home service that always follows a long stretch on a foreign station, I was already toying with the idea of leaving the Service and taking a chance as a musician in civilian life.

This home service was not regarded by everybody as an unmixed blessing, as the following true story goes to prove. A musician had been at home in the training ship for a month only when he put in to see the captain. He asked for permission to be sent to sea again.

"But why?" inquired the captain. "You've only just returned from foreign service."

The man explained that he did not get—or make—sufficient money to warrant stopping in the training service. On board a man-o'-war, he pointed out, he made a good bit extra by hair-dressing, which he could not do in the training ship, which had an official barber.

"How much does your money come to?" asked the captain.

"One-and-sevenpence a day, sir."

"That seems quite enough, too," said the officer, determined to put a stop to this nonsense. "What on earth do you do with it all?"

"Well, sir," replied the somewhat nettled musician, "when I've paid the rent of my rooms ashore, fed and clothed my wife and three children, I put what's left in the bank."

He was allowed to go.

All sorts of excuses have been put forward, at various times, by the men who want a change of duty: from day duty to night duty and *vice versa*. One of the most diverting (and perhaps the most reasonable) was given by a bluejacket who asked for a half day off.

"But you're allowed ashore every other night," said the commander. "What in the world do you want half a day for?"

The sailor explained that, as his alternate nightly leave began at dusk, he had to leave home at six in the morning in order to catch the 6.30 boat for his ship.

"And, sir," he ended, not without pathos, "I *do* feel I'd like to see my wife's face by daylight!"

I spoke to Mr. Lidiard about my future. He advised me to go in for promotion, and said he would put me in one of the training ships as band sergeant. I agreed to this, as I wanted home service; but a vacancy occurred in the Admiral's band at Portsmouth. It was for a 'cellist and, taking Mr. Lidiard's tip, I applied for it. It was a staff job, and one could keep it for good. What was more, the holder lived on shore and got one-and-sixpence a day living allowance. I got the job, went to Portsmouth, introduced myself to Chief Bandmaster Dowell and began work. It was easy enough. We rehearsed in a pub. every morning from eleven till half-past twelve, and played once a week for the Admiral. We always had Friday to Monday off, and as most of the fellows in the band had outside interests and engagements, this suited them well; but to me, living in diggings, it was tedious. Besides, I was not yet in the job-finding clique, and the occasional work in local theatres and music halls did not come my way. This was all the more irritating to me because the man who sat beside me in the band—although he was not as good a performer as myself—was able to make money outside.

However, Bandmaster Dowell very soon gave me to understand that I was to be first 'cello, and this meant that if any private engagements came along I was to have first choice. Gradually I wangled a few jobs, much to the disgust of the man beside me, since it meant that he had to stand down.

Eventually I secured an engagement to play three afternoons a week in the Cadena Café, in

Osborne Road, and for this I got the munificent remuneration of half-a-crown a show. But I wasn't grumbling, for it was a very welcome addition to my pay. Altogether now I was getting, with allowances, the handsome sum of twenty-eight shillings a week.

Things were looking up.

CHAPTER IX

GOING over my life on the China Station, with those brief days of leave in Japan, I find that it was interesting in all sorts of ways. For one thing, I was struck by the marked differences between Chinese and Japanese habits, although these people are neighbours on the map. My impression of China was dirt; of Japan cleanliness. The brisk, businesslike air of the Japanese, too, was remarkable when compared with the Chinese system. When tradesmen came on board for orders, for example, the Chinese representative would prove to be a regular "John Chinaman," complete with pigtail; but the Japanese would turn up in smart westernised clothing, even to the top hat.

On one occasion, though, the unexpected smartness of Chinese method surprised me very agreeably, I remember. I was suffering badly with toothache, and one of my pals advised me to go to a dentist, pointing out a basement establishment to me. Feeling rather fearful, I went down the steps and was shown into the "dental parlour." I had expected a very primitive affair, but the place was fitted up with American gadgets and looked most professional. A Chinese, wearing a white coat over national costume, came forward, and I began to explain my

case to him in pidgin English, as usual. He interrupted me politely.

"You may speak English," he said, in a perfect accent. "I shall understand." As a matter of fact, I learned that he was an Oxford man.

I sat in the dental chair and he examined the tooth—a stout molar. Then he told me to look at a public clock which could be seen through the grating which gave on the street.

It was just one minute past the hour.

He put some sort of preparation on my nose. It had no scent, but it did the trick, and I dropped into unconsciousness almost at once. I wandered about in "the wind that blows between the worlds" for a century or two, and then I heard his voice again, telling me to look at the time. I did so.

Less than a minute had passed. The tooth was out, and there was not a speck of blood. What is more, there was no instrument. He had, in accordance with ancient Chinese custom, pulled it out with his fingers. It was the neatest job I have ever seen.

There was a certain queer experience of another kind which made a great impression on me at the time. I went with some friends to see a monastery in North China, and among the things shown to us was a mummified hand: a shrivelled relic lying on a slab. The man who was showing us round then poured some fluid on the hand, and in a few seconds it had taken on the pinkish, fresh appearance of living flesh. I have no notion as to how this feat of trickery or chemistry was accomplished, but

if it was intended to astonish us it succeeded admirably.

It was while we were on the China Station that the *Terrible* made gunnery history, by the way. Her Captain, Percy Scott—as I have already said—was very keen on gunnery, and great progress was made under him. At that time gunnery was in a poor way and nobody seemed to think it was important; but Scott was determined to make a change.

At the annual prize-firing outside Hong Kong the *Terrible's* guns scored eighty-five per cent. of hits—an unheard-of thing in those days. Between thirty and forty per cent. was the average then. In this test, however, Leading Seaman Grounds scored eight hits, eight rounds in one minute with a six-inch gun firing a hundred pound shell. This speed and accuracy was due to Scott's loading-machine and the telescopic sights used. The gun, of course, was hand-loaded.

This record has been beaten to a frazzle since, but when it happened it created a furore at home in England. Such a result showed up, in glaring fashion, the generally rotten state of things, and the dear old aunties of the Admiralty were profoundly shocked and hurt by the exposure; so much so that when Scott returned to England he was very coldly received and it looked like the finish for him. But the Powers-that-be had reckoned without King Edward VII, who knew what was what. He sent Scott a telegram inviting him to Balmoral, and Scott went. During the visit King

Edward asked him what post he would like and, as a result of his answer, Scott was made Captain of the Gunnery School of H.M.S. *Excellent* at Portsmouth. This, by the way is not actually a ship, but an island called Whale Island.

King Edward's tactful and appreciative move naturally put a stop to any further display of acrimony on the Admiralty's part, and Scott came into his own.

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People have often asked me: "What was your opinion of Chinese and Japanese music?" But the truth is that I cannot distinctly remember hearing any. The kind I must have heard was of a very primitive sort and it made no particular impression on my mind. For one thing, although I had plenty of melodies floating round in my head in those days, I had not yet seriously considered the question of becoming a composer. If I were to return to the East now no doubt I should regard the national music from a very different stand-point and pay proper attention to it.

However, now that I was home again music was occupying a big place in my thoughts, and I was keeping my eyes open for a chance to improve my position. I had been working at my café engagement for some months when I happened to pass an almost completed new building in Portsmouth. There was a notice outside which said that this, too, was to be a café, and that there would be music every afternoon. That was good enough for me.

I hunted out the proprietor, talked to him for a bit, and he offered me the job. True, I only got

five pounds a week for the four of us (piano, violin, cornet, and myself as 'cello), but it was a beginning. I had started as a musical director.

The café was packed every day from four to six, when we played. After a while the proprietor told me that he had engaged two girls as pianist and vocalist. I was sorry to have to dismiss my own pianist, but it was made clear to me that I was still to be in charge.

The new pianist, Miss Robertson, was a real artiste, and played brilliantly. I stood in considerable awe of her, and told myself that I should have to go carefully since she knew more about music than I did. I had been afraid that she might try to impress the fact on me, but she did not, and we got on well together.

By now I was twenty-five and earning nearly three pounds a week. People, I reflected, were getting married on less than that every day in the week; and what was the use of this everlasting restlessness, anyhow?

"You'll lose that," one of my friends had said to me, "when you marry, my boy. There's nothing like it for making a man settle down."

Up to now I had never given the question of getting married two serious thoughts; but one night I took Miss Robertson out to dinner and, what with this and that, when we got up from the table we were an engaged couple.

Two months later we were married, and an optimistic proceeding it was considering the fact that all the cash we had in the world was a fiver given to the bride as a wedding present by an aunt of hers!

I borrowed that, bought my wedding clothes from a tallyman, paid the marriage fees and took my new wife to London, on what was left, for a short honeymoon. In those days, of course, a fiver *was* a fiver, and not about two-thirds of the amount.

Soon after this my added sense of responsibility made me see that I ought to try to get on a bit more, make more money. I turned the problem over in my mind and one day an idea came to me as I was passing a sign-board. I caught an excursion train to London and went to Fuller's headquarters in Regent Street where, in my belief that it is always the best plan to go to the fountain-head, I bluffed my way into the presence of the great J. B. Fuller himself. It took some doing, and a considerable amount of nerve, but I managed it. I had discovered that he was about to open a café in Portsmouth, a few doors away from the place where I was working, and that had given me my notion.

"J.B." was an American who had come over to London as a reporter during one of the famous exhibitions at Earl's Court. As a stall happened to be vacant this enterprising man took it and started making pop-corn. The pop-corn caught on at once, and was such a success that "J.B." did not return to America and his newspaper work, but opened a shop in Bond Street, established his chain of now world-famous chocolate shops and settled down in this country for good.

When I went into his room that day I little thought that I was making a friend for life; but I was. "J.B." looked me over and said:

"Well, young man, you've forced your way in

to see me, so I suppose it's important. What is it? I can give you five minutes." And pulling out his watch, he laid it on the table in front of him.

I talked to him, and presently he looked at his watch again.

"I gave you five minutes," he remarked, "and you've taken thirty-five. How much for your band?"

"Six pounds a week," I said. I had told him that if he wanted his Portsmouth venture to compete successfully with opposition he must have an orchestra, and that I could provide a better and more economical one than anybody.

"Well, you don't err on the side of expense," he answered, somewhat dryly. "Now, go back home. I'm coming down on Monday, and if they grant me a licence you can start."

I went home on air. Monday came, and so did Fuller.

"Let me see," he said. "What was your figure? Six guineas, wasn't it?"

"No, sir," I replied. "I told you six pounds in London, but if you care to make it guineas it will be very acceptable."

He laughed and held out his hand. That moment, I think, was the beginning of the friendship between us.

"I knew it was pounds," he said, "but I wanted to see what you'd say. Well, as you didn't try to put a fast one over on me we'll make it guineas."

Twenty-eight shillings more than I had been earning! I was delighted. Later on in life I was to get twenty-five guineas (extra to the ordinary

fee) for my personal attendance at a party with my Octet, but in those days the money "J.B." offered me seemed like a fortune.

We worked for him for over a year: four of us, playing two hours a day for six days a week. When "J.B." had finished his business at the shop, during his visits to Portsmouth, he would come round to my rooms—very humble lodgings, they were, over a bookshop—and talk to us and nurse the baby. I think he always had a shrewd distrust of my apparently steady-going qualities. I could see him quietly wondering where I should break out next. When I talked about my ambitions and my eagerness to leave the Navy he would smile, give a grunt and say nothing. Those silences of his were very significant to my wife. She would catch his look, smile too, and then regard me with a speculative expression in her eye.

When I sounded Mr. Dowell, bandmaster of the Admiral's band, about getting my discharge, he refused to consider such a thing. He was inclined to be rather pompous about it all, and asked me if I realised that 'cellists in the Navy were "as rare as strawberries at Christmas." I already knew that, when I hinted that it might not greatly matter to the Navy as a whole if it had no 'cellist from now on, he very properly ignored my unseemly levity. No argument could persuade him to second my application, and I saw that I was wasting my time. So I went to see Mr. Lidiard.

All the Navy bands, by now, had been turned over to the School of Music at Eastney Barracks,

which had recently been opened by Mr. Lidiard. Here it was proposed to train naval musicians on Kneller Hall lines, similar to their confrères in the Army.

Mr. Lidiard, as I expected, said that he would do what he could to help me, but he told me that I must have my application signed by the captain of the Royal Naval Barracks. As this gentleman had already refused his consent on a previous application I could not see how I was going to persuade him to change his mind. I was certainly up against a snag.

That evening, in the depths of depression, I dropped into a pub., and there I found a pal of mine, a Sergeant of Marines.

"What's up with you?" he said; and I told him.

"Would it be worth a fiver to you to get your papers?" he asked me, when I had finished. I said that it would be cheap at the price.

"All right, then," he agreed. "You fill in another application, give me two quid down, and the balance when you get the O.K. And not a word to anybody, mind!"

I gave him my promise and the first instalment. He thereupon imbibed three whiskies at my expense and I went out, poorer but considerably more cheerful.

Two weeks later he came to me and told me that I was to pack up and leave for headquarters the next morning; but he refused to answer any questions. The following morning I played the colours up with the band, as usual, and then reported to

the orderly sergeant, after which I was sent at once to Eastney Barracks. Mr. Lidiard told me that he had just received notification from the Admiralty of my discharge, but that it would be about a month before the final papers came through.

"But you can go on leave for four weeks if you think that would help," he said.

I jumped on my bicycle and rode back to the Naval Barracks at Portsmouth. I entered the practice room and at once came under the reproving eye of Mr. Dowell.

"Where have you been," he demanded, "since the colours were played up this morning?"

I told him that I had been sent to Eastney.

"Return to your instrument now," said Mr. Dowell severely, "and begin practice. You should have reported your absence to the Band Sergeant!"

I wanted to grin from ear to ear, but I kept my manner becomingly docile. Poor old Dowell! He liked me well enough, I think, but he liked his band a good deal more.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Dowell," I answered, "but I really can't oblige you this morning. You see, I'm on a month's leave."

For a moment apoplexy seemed imminent, but the immediate danger passed and his hue became more or less normal again. I gently explained that my visit to Eastney had been to return kit before discharge, and that I had terminated my position in the band. He would not believe me, and rushed off to see the Commander, but he got no satisfaction from that, of course. He never quite forgave me for "doing it on him" like that, and he hinted

darkly at his belief that there was "dirty work" somewhere.

Up to that point I was as mystified as he was, and I was keeping an open mind on the Dirty Work question. I went in search of my Sergeant of Marines who had performed the miracle; and then I got the story—or as much as he chose to tell me.

He said that he had simply waited for a morning when he had a big pile of papers for the Captain's signature—and for an occasion when that gentleman was in a devil of a hurry. Then he had slipped my application among a lot of other documents which the Captain signed without reading them. It sounded easy enough, put that way; but I still think he earned his money.

That day I went to see Mr. Windram at Whale Island, and he at once engaged me for three shows a week at five shillings a time. One month later I showed up at headquarters and received my discharge papers, shook hands with Mr. Lidiard and walked out of the Barracks. There was I—Jack Squire, ex-naval bandsman, quit of the Service after eleven years and 165 days in the Navy. A free man.

"J.B." and my wife were right in their estimate of me, I am afraid. After a few weeks this particular freedom began to irk me. For a long while a wish had been lurking somewhere at the back of my mind, and now it began to take definite shape and become insistent. My time was my own, to a certain extent, and I felt that, with a little manipulation, I could manage what I wanted to do. The thing worried at me and made me jumpy, and at last

I spoke of it to my wife. It wasn't an easy subject to broach, but she knew that something was up and maybe she wasn't very surprised.

"Do you think," I said to her one evening, "that you could carry on with the café band for a bit if I packed up my traps?"

"Packed up? Where do you want to go?"

"To Canada. I want to try my luck there. It's an up-and-coming place and I'm curious about it."

She thought for a few moments, her eyes on her work.

"All right, Jack," she answered quietly. "If you feel like that I suppose you must go. Well, speak to Mr. Fuller about it, and if he agrees with the idea I'll manage."

"J.B." agreed, so I made my preparations. After I had bought my ticket and the few extra things I needed I had about three pounds in my pocket when I went on board; but I landed in Canada with nearly a hundred. On the voyage I had the good fortune to fall in with some fellows who were wrongly persuaded that they could play poker better than I could.

I had a splendid time in Canada while the money lasted, but, unfortunately, a splendid time, often enough, does not help money to last very long. Inside a fortnight I was clean broke and up against the problem of finding a job. What it was I had expected out there I hardly know, but whatever it was, I couldn't find it. I tramped the boots nearly off my feet but it didn't get me anywhere. I discovered that there wasn't an earthly chance for an untrained man. Carpenters and farm hands were in

great demand, but there was a bad slump in musicians. One could hardly wonder at that, for there were no orchestras.

I struck Montreal with a dollar and a few cents left. I walked about the streets, listening to the mixture of French and English, feeling "stranded" and very doubtful about my chances of getting a living anyhow. Presently I found myself near a fair ground, just outside the town, and I drifted in, for the want of something better to do. In front of one big booth six husky men were parading, and a manager in a top hat and tail coat was doing the "spiel" and inviting people to walk up and put on the gloves with any of his "Champions." He promised ten dollars to any man who could stand up for three rounds.

I looked along the line. Those six boys were pretty tough, I saw, but ten dollars would be useful to me.

"Say, mister!" I sang out. "Do I have to fight a man my own weight, or do I have to batter that ten-ton bruiser of yours at the end of the row?"

The manager cocked his silk hat on one side and gave the crowd another "spiel," even more flowery than the last. He was telling the world that his outfit was on the level, and they weren't to make any mistake about that. It welcomed all challengers and—here he waved a hand in my direction—little Toni Caproni would be delighted to knock the stuffing out of "this yer candidate for a free funeral."

Toni was the one standing next to the heavy-weight, and I judged that he could give me a stone. But I had never been a boxer in the technical sense

of the word and I had won my fights mostly on knock-outs. I rather fancied having a slam at Toni, no matter what came of it. The Navy is a hard school, and I wasn't worrying much about a possible hammering. I could take punishment; I had nothing to lose, and I *might* make ten dollars.

"Right you are!" I shouted to the manager, and went forward.

The crowd loved it. There was a record gate and the tent soon filled up. I stepped into the ring that was lit by naphtha flares, and the bout began. Toni—a splendid fellow and a good pal of mine later on—out-boxed me handsomely for two rounds, and I think he was puzzled to know how I kept my feet and came up smiling for the third. By that time I had a black eye and a cut lip.

Then he went in to finish it off, but just a shade too quickly. He left himself wide open and I slammed in one terrific punch to the solar plexus. Toni went down and was still grinning unconsciously at the canvas roof long after the count had finished.

CHAPTER X

THE "boss" held my hand aloft and presented me with the ten dollars amid a perfect roar of cheering.

"I'm proud to hand you this purse," said he. "You're the only guy in four months who's ever knocked out one of my boys. And say! That was a wallop! Son, ten bucks was cheap to see a punch like that. Where did you learn it?"

In a quieter voice he added: "Come round to my tent after."

I went round when the show was over, and Toni and the rest of the boys were all there, waiting to shake my hand.

"What are you doing now, son?" asked the manager.

"Nothing," I said. "I'm flat broke—except for your ten dollars."

"Then why not join this outfit?" he suggested, "We can do with a guy like you."

There and then I signed on at five dollars a week, to fight all comers. It was grand fun, and I stuck it for three months, licking scores of complete strangers and taking two or three good hidings, but never failing to stand up for the full three rounds.

Usually it was a walk-over; just the business of

a professional playing with an amateur and treating him fairly gently. But now and again—for we were touring all over Canada—some hefty lumber-jack would roll up, or a miner as tough as granite, or some game and fancy scrapper one could not place; and then we fought “all out.”

We lived in tents and travelled by road, moving the outfit by horse-transport, with a steam waggon for the heavy stuff. The grub was good, fresh from the farms *en route*, and we were all as fit as blazes. We gave two shows a day, and sometimes a procession as well.

When everything had been made ready we were free to lounge about and spin yarns, or perhaps we would have a look round the locality and do our bit of shopping. On Sundays we spent the day moving along the roads, but in the evening the Boss would call a halt and hold an impromptu service. He was by way of being a religious man, and his great ambition was to become an evangelist. I do not know if he ever attained to it, but he was certainly a very decent, straight fellow and he possessed a sort of rough eloquence which would have stood him in good stead in such a capacity.

Apart from the daily professional scrapping nothing much happened, though there was one rather amusing incident which made a break in routine as far as I was concerned.

In the tent next to mine was a young woman who told fortunes. Rumour had it that she was attached to the heavy-weight, so my embarrassment can be imagined when she began to display a partiality for my company. I have always been a

one-woman man all my life, and, to be perfectly candid, she never interested me in the least.

What passed between her and the heavyweight, on the subject of me, I never knew, but for some obscure reason he challenged me to fight.

"What on earth for?" I asked. "Why should I?"

"C'mon!" he said, giving me a dirty look. That was when I first suspected the hand of the lady in all this. I wanted to tell him not to be such a fool, but I knew by the glint in his eye that it wouldn't go down well just then.

"All right, then," I answered. "If you really want to fight—c'mon yourself!"

With that we went at it hammer and tongs, with the lady in the offing—enjoying herself tremendously, I have no doubt.

It crossed my mind, even as I squared up to him, that if this bout was being run on "winner-take-all" lines I might be in an awkward spot! But I suppose I began to enjoy the scrap for its own sake, and I went all out to whack him, no matter what happened after.

When I had finished with him his face was a mess. But my fears about the lady proved to be entirely unfounded. It was the heavyweight's chest she threw herself on, mess or no mess. I left her mopping him up with a bowl of water, over which he was gazing at her devotedly—or as devotedly as a man may with a black eye and a pair of cut lips.

"Well, all the luck in the world to the pair of you!" I said; and amicable relations were restored.

I suppose I might have guessed how it would turn out, anyway, but it had given me a nasty moment or two.

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At the end of three months the old restlessness got hold of me again, and when I felt like that there was nothing for it but change, as I knew. I told the Boss that I wanted to get back to England. He was very understanding, and he said he was sorry to lose me, for I had been a useful man to have about the place. So I said "good-bye" to my pals in the booth, packed off to Montreal and sailed for Southampton; and on the homeward voyage I had a bit more luck with the cards and won just over £80, which came in useful at home.

At this time, of course, I never approached the "big money" mark. It was a long while before I did that; but I always felt, somehow, that I should do pretty well sooner or later. And I was right. Some years ago, I remember, I happened to meet one of my contemporaries in the Service: a chap who had just left the Navy. He was strolling round London when we bumped into each other. We talked in a general way for a few minutes and then he said:

"You know, Jack, you were a fool to leave. I've served my time, and now look at me. I've got twenty-eight shillings a week pension for life. Think of that, old man!"

Here, I regret to say, I could not resist a touch of vulgar bragging.

"H'm. Just about pay for my lunch," I answered; and, to his amazement, I told him that I was

making four thousand a year, whereas his twenty-eight shillings represented nothing more than five per cent. interest on about fourteen hundred pounds.

But at the time of my return from Canada that extra eighty was a very handy little sum. I went back to my work in the café, but not for long. I had heard a lot about the money musicians could make on the liners, so I decided to have a go at that, and I wrote to Charles W. Black in Liverpool. Black was musical director for half a dozen big liners, and not only a good musician but a first class business man—a rare combination. As a matter of fact, very few musicians have business heads or ever make really big money out of playing. It takes a Kreisler to do that.

It was Black who conceived the idea of introducing small orchestras on the Atlantic liners. There were musicians of a sort on the Cape boats and Australian liners then, but they were very indifferent players who had to combine music with stewards' duties. Black's notion of employing professional musicians was an instantaneous success when it was tried out, and other shipping companies adopted the scheme, leaving the arrangements to him. He rehearsed all his orchestras personally, and he could get more out of a bunch of duds than the average band-provider could get out of good players. He offered me the position of 'cellist on the *Cedric*, a 20,000 ton boat which was scheduled to go to New York from Liverpool, then do trips to Alexandria (with tourists) and back to Liverpool. I accepted and was away from home about five months.

The orchestra consisted of two violins, 'cello, piano and double bass: a very practical combination which is capable of playing practically anything in the ordinary orchestral line, by the way. Our pay was from four to five pounds a month, with a sixth share in a collection taken up at the end of the trip. In addition to this we were berthed and fed and treated as Second Class passengers. Taking it by and large it was not a bad job.

The collection, however, was very disappointing. This was not at all what I had expected and I felt mad about it, until one of our fellows explained to me that the real money was made only on the "crack" boats on the Western Ocean trade: Liverpool and Southampton to New York. At that I said it would have to be a crack boat for me next time, that was all.

When we got home Black wanted me to go for another trip like this first one, but I refused. I told him that if ever he had a vacancy on one of those other liners I would take it with pleasure; and there the matter rested.

I was with my family for three weeks after leaving the *Cedric*, but the money question was agitating me. By now we had two little boys to keep.

"I shall go to London," I said to my wife. "That's where the money's made." The usual dream of the aspirant in the provinces!

I had another talk with J. B. Fuller, and the upshot of it was that I left my wife in charge of the band and skipped off to Town.

"J.B." invited me to lunch, that first day, at his place in Regent Street, and introduced me to Brown and Mendel, his musical directors there. They asked me to play to them and, when they had heard me, promised to do all they could for me.

I went to live with my mother in Harringay. Father had died in the meantime and she had no means beyond a small pension from the School Board and the Teachers' Superannuation Fund, but we managed somehow, thanks to her good housekeeping—and her unselfishness. It was a heart-breaking business, all the same, waiting for something to turn up. She never said a bitter or reproachful word, and if she sometimes went on short commons (as I strongly suspected) she took good care that I should have no proof of it.

"Why can't I make good?" I said to her in one of my fits of desperation.

"A lot depends on what you mean by 'making good,' my dear," she answered. "I've never doubted that you'll do that, you know. It depends on what you want."

"I want money!" I said. "Money—and a lot of it. What else should I want?"

"Money isn't everything, Jack."

"It's pretty nearly everything. What's the use of pretending to myself that it isn't? Anyway, I've never seen anything that could take its place yet. A good job and good money—that's what I want. Shall I ever get them?"

"Maybe you will, my dear," said mother. She looked at me gently and added: "And then perhaps

you'll know that what I'm telling you is true. There's something more than money that a human being can have."

"Well, I'll take the money for a start, anyway," I answered.

Day after day, week after week, I watched for the postman or the telegraph boy. And still nothing happened.

One evening I was walking along a road in Harringay when I saw a woman begging. Two small children were hanging on to her skirts, and she came up to me and asked if I would help her. She little knew it, but all I had in the world was the tenpence in my pocket. I gave it to her.

She said "God bless you, sir," and went on. So did I, telling myself I was all kinds of a sentimental fool for parting like that with my last sou. And when I got home mother came into the hall, her eyes shining.

"There's a telegram for you!" she said.

It was from the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, and it offered me a job: playing in the orchestra, two houses nightly, at four and tenpence a night.

Tenpence. That odd amount stuck in my mind, I felt that it was a good omen. I suppose all gamblers are superstitious. Anyway, I had started in London—at last. And now anything might happen.

Two days later I got a message telling me to go to the Russell Hotel, where Brown and Mendel played in the evenings. I went round, and here I met one of the kindest and most considerate men

with whom I have ever had to deal: Signor Bonifacio. He had, in addition, just taken over the Inns of Court Hotel, and he offered me the job of playing in his new venture. It meant thirty shillings a week for three evenings' work, but it was going to make all the difference to mother and me.

I kept on with small jobs of this sort for some time, and then I happened to hear that a 'cellist was wanted for one of the Viennese bands so popular in London just then. So-called Viennese and Hungarian bands were getting all the private engagements, the fashion having been started by King Edward VII, who had expressed a wish to have a Viennese orchestra at the National Sporting Club. Herr Stanislaus Wurm came over from Vienna with his band, in consequence, and was simply overwhelmed with work.

Stanislaus Wurm's orchestra was, in all probability, the only genuine all-Viennese production. Most of the other Hungarian, Viennese, and what-have-you were mainly humbug, the only foreigner of the lot being the conductor, nine times out of ten.

Herr Gottlieb, who came over with Stanislaus Wurm as his leader, was the first to see the possibilities of the situation. He broke away and formed an orchestra of his own, gathering round him a few Englishmen who were excellent musicians. Ferdinand Weist-Hill, his leader, was easily the finest English violinist of that time—perhaps of any time. He was a pupil of Ysaye, and a First Prize at the Brussels Conservatoire. Gottlieb's 'cellist, Charles Preuveneers (an Englishman in spite of his name) was also a great artiste.

Gottlieb used to do all the "royal business," and one afternoon, at Buckingham Palace, Queen Alexandra asked him to play the *Meistersinger* Overture. Unfortunately she was out of the room when it was played, and when all the guests had gone she told Gottlieb how sorry she was to have missed it. Gottlieb offered to play it again, and she and King Edward sat down to listen to it quietly.

Just as the orchestra was about to start a footman came into the room and said that the musicians' tea was waiting for them.

"Oh, bring it in here," said the Queen, "after this piece."

The Overture came to an end and tea was brought in; and now the musicians were treated to the never-to-be-forgotten spectacle of the Queen-Empress helping the footman in passing round the tea and cakes to them. It was, I think, a tribute to them as artistes, for Queen Alexandra was a great lover of music and herself a fine pianist. Many a time she would sit on the long piano stool and turn over the music for Budmani, Gottlieb's pianist.

When Gottlieb disassociated himself from Wurm, Stanislaus retaliated by getting his two brothers, Moritz and Simon, over to London. These two joined forces with one of the foremost West End agencies and thereafter Blue Hungarian and Imperial Viennese bands began to sprout freely. Englishmen who acted as soloists were billed as Herr Jones, Herr Morton, Herr Squire, and so on. It was a great game while it lasted.

Simon Wurm was the man I interviewed when I applied for the post as 'cellist. The whole business

of the Hungarian ramp was really very funny. In some instances we were strictly forbidden to talk to anybody, and the edict was that, if we were addressed by a member of the public, we were to look amicably vague and reply: "I no spik ze Eengleesh." Of course, to assist in the illusion, we were put into uniform, with top boots and all the rest of it.

An "incident" arose out of this no-talking rule, one night at a big diplomatic reception in Downing Street. We had been playing for quite a long while when a guest, obviously very interested in the music, detached himself and strolled up to us. He picked on Tommy Parker, one of the violins.

"Ah!" said the guest. "So you are a Hungary man, eh?"

Old Tommy, feeling rather under the weather after sawing away for three hours without a bite or a sip of anything, blew up.

"A Hungary man?" he retorted. "You bet I am! And bloody thirsty too!"

Tommy, as might be expected, was sacked as a result of his candour.

When Simon Wurm engaged me, after an audition, he booked me to go to Bridlington for Easter week, and again for sixteen weeks in the summer. I was the only 'cello in a band of sixteen, and I had to play solos when called upon to do so. For this my salary was to be £2 15s. a week. On my way home I met a musician I knew, and he told me that he was just off to a gramophone session.

"Never heard of 'em!" I said.

"Well," he answered, "there's money to be made by playing for gramophone companies. You think it over."

I thought it over, and went on doing so. However, I could do nothing about it then on account of the Bridlington engagement.

Easter week passed off uneventfully and I came back to my odd spots of deputising in London, to wait for Whitsun and the opening of the season.

One of the bands I played in had a conductor who liked to browbeat everybody—he was one of those people who 'always know everything.' One day an argument started between him and some other members of the band, when we were on the platform—in between pieces—just a friendly argument, until I was asked my opinion—I gave it for what it was worth, but it happened to be against the conductor, who immediately said to me

"You're a bloody liar!"

I put down my 'cello.

"If you don't take that back," I said, "I'll hit you clean off the box into the middle of the audience!"

"All right," he answered. "I take 'im back. But you . . . you get der sack, now at once!"

The manager was a good sort and, as I did not want to cause any trouble from his point of view, I walked off the platform. When he heard what had happened he was sympathetic but helpless, for the matter lay with the conductor, and not with him. I could get neither my money nor my fare back to London, and a few days later I faced up to the

fact that I had fivepence with which to meet a week's bill for board and lodging, to say nothing to the remittance my family expected from me.

I sat in my bedroom, wondering what I was going to do. I had to get money from somewhere, and P.D.Q.

CHAPTER XI

I WAS in a nice fix, and no mistake! I stared out of my bedroom window, wondering what the next move was to be. And then, in the distance, I noticed some men working near the top of a house, putting up an electric sign.

Electric signs. . . . That reminded me of something. It wasn't the first time I had been in a hole like this. Years ago I had got out of a worse difficulty. So why not now?

I ran downstairs to the landlady and knocked on her door.

"I want to borrow something," I said. For an instant her face clouded.

"It's all right," I assured her. "I only want your pastry-board, a big sheet of white paper and some pen and ink."

"My goodness, sir! Whatever for?" she inquired. In half a life-time of lodgers she had been asked for some curious things, but never for such an assortment as this.

"And a piece of string, if you'll be so kind," I added.

Amazed but indulgent, she produced the requisite articles. I pinned the paper on the board and wrote on it in large lettering:

I am a professional musician and an Englishman, with a wife and two children to support. In the course of my work here I have been insulted by a foreigner—and dismissed because I stood up for myself.

Those may not have been the exact words, but that was the spirit of them, I remember.

"That," I said to myself, "ought to fetch them!"

Then I put on my best suit, took my 'cello and went out to the top of the Spa, where people had to pass on their way to the concerts. I hung the board on a lamp-post, put my fivepence in my upturned hat and set it down on the pavement beside me.

I began to play and people gathered round. My discomfort soon wore off, for I sensed, very quickly, that the atmosphere was sympathetic to me. I was not begging in any shape or form: I knew it and so did my listeners. I was giving them something they would have had to pay for anywhere else, and I think I played my best that day.

Every now and then a man or woman would come up to me, put something discreetly into the hat and speak to me, asking me for details. I told the truth, and the word went round, I suppose. Anyway, it certainly "fetched them." I gave solo after solo, and a friendly newsagent, whose shop was near by, came out several times and emptied the hat for me. After an hour and a half I packed up, went into his place and counted my takings.

I had raked in over fifteen pounds!

To make it still more gratifying, the younger members of my audience went on to the concert, where they livened things up with cat-calls and

finally succeeded in hissing the conductor off the platform.

Next morning the conductor sent a messenger round with my railway fare. I went back to London, consulted a lawyer and started an action for wrongful dismissal. The matter was settled out of court and I got the whole of my salary for the remainder of the season.

Then I secured another engagement with Signor Bonifacio. There were so many calls on my purse, however, that it was hard going. I earned fifty shillings a week, and my home expenses were two guineas at least. Out of what was left I paid Jacques Renard (then principal 'cellist of the Queen's Hall Orchestra) five shillings a week for a lesson.

This, by the way, was the only 'cello tuition I ever had; half a dozen lessons. To take them I used to walk all the way from Russell Square to Maida Vale, and then back again. There was nothing to spare for buses, let alone cabs.

I knew what it was to be hungry again, too. Sometimes I used to look at the diners, when I was playing in the orchestra, and get a twisted sort of amusement out of wondering what they would think if they knew that the 'cellist, by and by, was going to sneak a few rolls from the dining-room.

Anyhow, it was something to eat next day, and often there was precious little else.

Eventually I got a letter from C. W. Black, offering me a post as 'cellist on the *Mauretania*. He had not forgotten my remark at parting. I closed with the offer and ten days later I was crossing the Atlantic again.

It was a very different experience from my trip in the *Cedric*, for the *Mauretania* carried wealthy passengers and the band collections were often five or six times in excess of our monthly salaries. I was making, at a rough estimate, ten pounds a week, with my "keep" thrown in.

I was on board when the *Mauretania* broke the record and gained the Blue Riband of the Atlantic. The event, I remember, inspired me to poetic fervour. I erupted into a set of verses which were published in the New York papers. Certain stanzas of that momentous work come back to me now. It was of the "Fireman's Wedding" genre, and appropriately robust.

*"Six fifty-one was the record before we made
this trip.*

*'Twas held by the 'Lusitania'—her they call our
sister ship."*

About a hundred lines of it; real he-man stuff.

But, to be quite candid, this liner job was tedious. What was new and exciting to a lot of the passengers was stale to us, and it began to look to me like a waste of time when I considered that I was doing nothing at all with the four days I had in New York on each outward journey. We lived on board during that time, of course, and there wasn't much novelty about it. I wanted some excitement—and badly.

I found it in the smuggling racket. It had not taken me long to discover that the Americans were tremendously keen on British goods, particularly

English clothing. They would buy anything in that line, and ask no questions.

Gloves, ties and handkerchiefs were my speciality. They were fairly easy to secrete, for one thing. At one time I had a hundred pounds' worth of silk stuff with me: duchesse sets and so forth, and I was very bothered about getting it ashore. The authorities were suspicious, and we were searched every time we went ashore during those four days in New York. On the last night, knowing that it was now-or-never, I got desperate and took a chance. I changed into evening dress; but things were not entirely what they seemed. I had wads of duchesse sets under my vest and silk ties wound round my legs under my trousers.

I grabbed my 'cello and went up to one of the Customs officers, a man I knew.

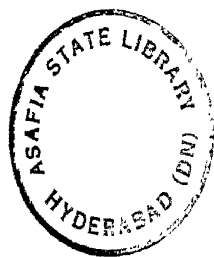
"Look here," I said, "I'm in a hurry to-night. I've got to play at one of those beefsteak dinners, and I've only six minutes to catch my train. Give me a quick run over, there's a good chap, will you?"

I unstrapped the 'cello case and exposed its blameless interior; I threw back my raincoat and then started to take off my dinner jacket. I hoped this undressing wasn't going on indefinitely, but bluff was the only thing for it; and it worked.

"That's all right!" he said when I was half out of one sleeve. "O.K.!" And ashore I went.

On my last trip, however, I was caught with two gold watches, and it cost me a hundred pounds in palm-grease to get away with that.

Gambling was terrific among the *Mauretania's* passengers. I have seen as much as £5,000 in the



CHRISTOPHER STONE AND J. H. SQUIRE MEETING AT
GORLESTON-ON-SEA

pot at one time, at Poker. The pool on the day's run was never less than £500, and sometimes it went up to £2,000. And of course there were the usual professional card-players making regular trips and raking in huge sums.

The general monotony, for me, was relieved by my contraband activities, and by the interesting folk I now began to meet when I was on shore. I got to know, among others, Colonel Cody ("Buffalo Bill"), Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) and Victor Herbert. Wonderful personalities, all of them.

Victor Herbert, though perhaps his name is not well known among musicians to-day, was one of the leading conductors in the States at that time. He started as a 'cellist—and what a 'cellist! When he was eighteen he was the principal 'cello at Bayreuth, the home of German music. Then he had the misfortune to break his arm; or perhaps one might say the good fortune, for in consequence of this accident he gave himself up to composition and conducting, which naturally enlarged his public. He became, in fact, the Sullivan of America.

One day the four of us—Cody, Clemens, Herbert and myself—were having drinks together in the Lambs Club, the American equivalent of our Green Room Club. Mark Twain was very preoccupied on that occasion; so much so that he almost forgot to lift his elbow. Usually the most generous of men, he seemed, moreover, to have forgotten that we were lifting ours. The three of us kept ordering drinks and paying for them, but Mark Twain just sat there humped in his chair, his bushy brows meeting across his nose.

"What's up with you, Sam?" asked Herbert.

Clemens roused himself. He explained that he was being bothered by his publisher. He had undertaken to write his autobiography and was in trouble because he was late with the instalments.

"Autobiography, eh?" said Herbert. This was a new departure for Clemens.

"With the accent on the *buy*, I suppose, Sam?" put in Cody.

Herbert shook his head.

"No, Bill, no!" he reproved, his eye on our empty glasses. "The accent should be on the *ought-to-buy*."

Mark Twain, with a twinkle, accepted the timely hint.

Another time Herbert took my arm and said: "Come along, Jack, I'm going to give you the best coffee you ever tasted. You English don't know what coffee's like."

We went along to the Waldorf-Astoria and were shown into a magnificent sitting-room on the first floor. This hotel, of course, was the most palatial in New York. Herbert and I were talking together when in came a man whose face seemed familiar to me, though I could not place him.

"Hullo, Vic!" said the stranger. "And who's the young friend?"

Herbert shook hands with him and introduced me.

"This is J. H. Squire, Ted. An English friend of mine. A musician—and a hustler."

The other man smiled, and I was still wondering about that haunting identity. Then Herbert added:

"Here is the man who'll give us some real coffee, J.H. Meet Theodore Roosevelt, the President of the United States of America."

It was almost too much for me. Bred in conservative England, drilled in the iron discipline of the Navy, knowing the awe in which the heads of state are held over here, this free-and-easy mode of address seemed almost like sacrilege. But I was speedily put at my ease. The coffee was brought in and Victor launched into an animated dissertation on why the English could never produce that beverage decently, but the President interrupted him by asking me the usual question as to what I thought of America and Americans. Since questions were in order I asked him one:

"Why won't you stand a third term in office, sir?" Roosevelt, at that time, was nearly finishing his second term as President.

He laughed.

"Against precedent," he said. "Nobody has ever stood a third term in America's history."

He talked about his proposed hunting trip in South Africa, about this and that, and exchanged reminiscences with Herbert, and I spent one of the most enjoyable hours I ever remember, sitting there and listening to the friendly chat of these two famous men.

I suppose there is something fundamentally comforting to the ordinary citizen in discovering that public heroes are human, though I really do not know why we should ever imagine otherwise. All the same, it usually comes with a sense of surprise, that realisation. My personal experience has been

that really great men do not lose their natural charm and simplicity; they are not snobs—because they have no need to be. They are not conscious of the insecurity which has to occupy itself from morning to night with the question of Prestige and How to Keep it.

In America I also got in touch with Ted Snyder, musical chief of the Ted Snyder Music Company, Inc., on West 38th Street, New York.

The brains of the firm was a man named Henry Waterson and, for some reason, he took a great liking to me.

He gave me several delicate commissions to execute for him on this side, and he was so pleased with my work that, later on, I suggested that he should open a branch in London and put me in. He agreed to that, and I was offered the job as London and European manager, which meant giving up my engagement on the *Mauretania* and settling in London again.

Before that, however, a very interesting thing happened. I was in Waterson's office one day when in came a shabby, nervous little Jewish fellow, not much more than a boy. He asked Waterson if he would like to buy a song.

"Why, yes," was the reply. "That's what we're here for. Let's hear what you've got."

The caller sat down at the piano and played the first verse and chorus of a composition, and Waterson nodded.

"Not bad!" he commented. "Go away and write the second verse."

The boy took up his manuscript and went out, and we heard no more of him. And then, as Waterson and I were out together one day, I felt a nudge.

"Look!" said the publisher, pointing across the road. "Isn't that the little chap who brought us the first verse of a song, some time back?" And without another word he crossed the road. Waterson knew promising stuff when he heard it.

He walked up to the lad and said:

"Have you written that second verse yet?"

The other's face was all surprise.

"Gee, boss! You didn't *mean* it?"

"Certainly I meant it. Why not?"

"Then I'll bring it to your office within half an hour!" said the young fellow; and he kept his promise. Inside that time he turned up breathless, with the ink still wet on the paper. Waterson looked at it.

"How much do you want for it?"

"I don't know." He flushed, "I only know that I want a good meal. I haven't had anything to eat in two days."

"I'll give you twenty-five dollars for your song," said Waterson. "Go and have a meal right now. And look here!"—he held out a pen—"Put your signature to this agreement. When you come back you might as well hang around this office a while. I guess we can find you a job."

The name of the song was "Dorando," and it was written on the subject of the Marathon Race between Dorando and Hayes, in Madison Square Gardens.

The name of the hungry lad was Irving Berlin.

That was how he started on the road to fortune and world-wide fame.

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Back in London I rented offices in New Oxford Street and started my job as London and European manager for the Ted Snyder firm.

Financially it was not a very lucky venture for me. I was trying to introduce jazz into this country, but people were not ready for it. Music halls and pantomimes were still thinking in terms of chorus songs and ballads. Two years later we were as jazz-mad as America, but that was too late to help me much.

However, Waterson and Irving Berlin came over to England and the English began to develop the first symptoms. These two men had travelled over with Lord Northcliffe and he became very interested in their work, for Berlin, by this time, was well known as a song writer in America. Northcliffe, as soon as they landed, proceeded to boost him in the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*. I had known the craze *would* come, of course, which only made the hold-up I had experienced all the more exasperating.

I got to my office and found Waterson and Berlin waiting for me there. Berlin told me that I should have to show him round, as he wanted to get a line on our national tastes. It meant a frantic ten days for me, but we did it. I also 'phoned through to George Grossmith (who was singing "Yip-I-Addy-I-Ay" at the Gaiety and bringing down the house) and suggested that he should come round

to the office and meet Berlin. He came, and the little American made a very favourable impression, apparently, for Grossmith asked him to write a song for him to sing at the Gaiety. I do not think the plan ever matured, but the proposition showed that Berlin was getting himself noticed by people "in the know" over here.

Anyway, he made good use of his time, for some months after his return to America he sent me a song which he thought might be useful to me. It was. I gave it to a Jewish comedian named Sam Stern, and the very first night he put it on at the Shoreditch Olympia it made such a hit that Stern found himself transferred to the bill at the old Oxford, with a £40 increase in his salary! This song, "Yiddle On Your Fiddle, Play Some Rag-time," was actually the first fox-trot ever sung in this country.

When Berlin and Waterson were due to sail back Bennett Scott and I went down to Southampton to see them off. The four of us went into the smoking-room on board and got so interested in our talk that we forgot all about the time. Bennett Scott and I suddenly realised that the ship was moving.

"It looks like little old New York for us, after all," I said, but Waterson assured us that we should be able to get off at Cherbourg. The trouble was that Scott and I had scarcely any money on us and, to make it still more difficult, the Purser charged us thirty shillings each for our lunch and passage. Waterson and Berlin scraped together all their remaining English money and handed it over to us. It came to ten pounds, which we thought

would see us through admirably. It did, but our adventures were not yet at an end. We got off at Cherbourg, booked a couple of berths on a little cargo steamer sailing that night, and started out to see the town. We had four hours to spare before leaving.

"Wait a minute," said Bennett, pulling a piece of paper and a pencil out of his pocket. "We don't speak French, either of us, so I'll just copy down the name of this street. Then anybody will tell us the way back to the docks."

At that he laboriously wrote down the lettering on the wall and we felt happier. We spent a couple of hours in a restaurant, walked about a bit and then decided that it was time to get going. We hailed a cab and showed the driver our piece of paper.

He looked at it, emitted an explosive sound which we took to be profanity, waved his arms at us and drove away.

People who had heard the explosion came up and stared at us, so we exhibited the paper. Shouts of laughter greeted this move, and we were beginning to wonder if the French are as mad as they think the English are—when up strolled an officer of police. Happily for us he knew a few words of English, and grasped the fact that we wanted to go to the docks, so he hailed another cab and put us in.

When we got on board we found the Captain and the Mate sitting down to supper and we gave them a résumé of our experiences in Cherbourg.

"Let's see that paper," said the Mate, who could speak and read French.

Wonderingly we handed it over. The Mate rocked and shouted with mirth and it was about five minutes before we could get any sense out of him.

Bennett Scott had copied down a phrase which may be translated into polite English as "Commit No Nuisance."

Irving Berlin's next song, "Alexander's Ragtime Band," was a tremendous hit. It simply swept the country, and it was pure bad luck that the management and distribution of it did not come into my hands. It just happened that, at this time, the American Company decided to close its London office and sell the European rights of its catalogue. These were sold to Feldman, who was able to bid higher than I could. Bert Feldman netted about £80,000 over that song . . . and I missed a fortune.

And so, once more, I was out of a job.

CHAPTER XII

DURING that time in Oxford Street I got to know one man I am never likely to forget.

As I was going up in the lift one day I fell into conversation with another tenant of the building. He was a queer-looking little customer, wearing a silk hat, frock coat, striped trousers, yellow waistcoat and spats over brown boots; but, notwithstanding these peculiarities, I found him very interesting to talk to. He had offices just below mine and, after that first meeting, it became almost a habit with me to pop down during the afternoon and have a cup of tea with him. His typist, a quiet, pleasant girl, would wait on us, and many an enjoyable half hour I spent with them. The little fellow was an American—or so I gathered—and he had moved about a good bit and could talk well on all sorts of subjects, though always quietly and modestly. One could not help liking him.

Subsequent events came as a great shock to me, for his name was Crippen, and he was afterwards hanged for murdering his wife. The girl who poured out tea for us was Ethel le Neve—the third point of the triangle.

The hue and cry after Dr. Crippen, when he disappeared, is a matter of radio—as well as criminal

—history, for it was the first occasion on which Wireless was used to track a fugitive from justice. Crippen and le Neve, it will be remembered, tried to make a get-away to Canada on the *Montrose*, with le Neve disguised as a boy; but as a result of the Captain's suspicions and the consequent wireless communication they were arrested by detectives when they reached Father Point.

While all this was going on the excitement in this country was intense, and when Crippen was brought back for trial he figured in the public imagination as a first-class Bluebeard and blackguard. The dismemberment of the body was—as is generally the case—the feature which horrified people most, but this point of view always strikes me as being very illogical. One cannot suppose that anybody, even a murderer, would take any pleasure in such a task. I am quite sure that a man like Crippen would not; but, as a famous authority once said, this particular antipathy is essentially that of the layman, and really has very little to do with the criminal aspect of the case. A man with a body on his hands is seldom concerned with anything other than the problem of concealment, and who can wonder? Personally, I feel that the element of accident existed somewhere in this Crippen case, though the results, of course, were dire for all those concerned. I have met criminals of all kinds in my time and I find myself totally unable to class Crippen with them. I think he was fundamentally a harmless little man, but he was hounded by long domestic unhappiness into a horrible situation from which there was no escape. Needless to say, I followed the

accounts of that chase and the famous trial with feelings of the liveliest discomfort.

There was another man, too, who was restless, like me, throughout that period. He was Auguste van Biene, the celebrated actor-musician, and a friend of mine.

Van Biene happened to come into my office one day when Crippen was there. This, by the way, was not long before the flight, and the death of his wife, I imagine, had already taken place. I introduced the two men, and Crippen was visibly impressed by this contact with the celebrated composer of "The Broken Melody." He sat forward in his chair, peering at him shyly and interestedly through his thick glasses; and presently, van Biene explained his errand. He was always hard up and he had come to borrow a fiver; but I was hard up too at the time and couldn't oblige him.

The little doctor cleared his throat and said, very politely:

"Perhaps, Mr. Squire, your friend would do me the honour of accepting my help in his—er—temporary financial embarrassment?" And he produced a five pound note, there and then.

Van Biene was delighted, and promised to pay it back quite soon. But almost directly after that Crippen disappeared, knowing that the grim secret in the cellar at his North London house was suspected. Van Biene and I went to the trial (he had a couple of passes) and saw the poor little chap sentenced to death. He took it very quietly.

Seated next to us, I remember, was Edgar Wallace. Crippen's personality, as well as the evidence, made

this case an interesting one to writers and criminologists all over the country.

I wrote to the condemned man while he was in prison, asking him if there was anything I could do for him, but of course there was not. On the day of the execution van Biene came round to me, and we went out, both of us being too restless to settle down to any work. Van Biene seemed particularly disturbed. He kept on wiping his forehead and saying that something—some elusive factor in all this—was worrying him, and that he couldn't for the life of him think what it was. We went to a billiards match, but he was so jumpy that folk glared at us and we had to come out again.

We were walking along the street when, all at once, van Biene stopped and stared at me.

"Good God!" he said. "I know what it is! *I never gave that poor little devil his five pounds!*"

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Van Biene caused trouble one other night at a match, I remember. He was very keen on billiards and a brilliant player himself. We went together to see George Gray, the Australian, play. Gray's speciality was a losing hazard off the red ball into the middle pocket, the red, with uncanny regularity, going up to the top of the cushion and coming back back to its original position by the pocket. On this night Gray made about 900 from this one shot, and van Biene, reaching a nervous crisis, suddenly yelled: "For God's sake miss it!"

We were requested to leave, which we did with as much dignity as was possible in the circumstances.

Van Biene was a really great 'cellist, but because he played for the people he was very coldly regarded by would-be "highbrows." He came to this country from Holland, and had a very thin time for a while, being reduced to playing in the streets. Here Sir Michael Costa found him and took him to Covent Garden, where van Biene became principal of the Opera.

Then he wrote "The Broken Melody," made a fortune and—of course—lost it. After that he went on the halls, and the concert platforms knew him no more. Very few 'cellists would attempt to play the difficult Piatti Concerto, one of the most difficult pieces ever written for the instrument; but Van thought no more of it than the average player would think of the scale of C.

I have never heard anybody put over a slow movement as he could, and when he played "Home, Sweet Home" I have seen hard-boiled people in the audience crying like children. He was a highly gifted artiste, a great showman—and a true friend.

I still possess a copy of a piece entitled "Shadows of the Night," with pictures of Van and me on the title page, and the inscription, "Composed by Auguste van Biene and J. H. Squire." I met Van one morning—in his customary penurious condition—and I suddenly had an idea that might mean a bit of money for the pair of us.

In my spare time I was in the habit of scribbling scraps of melody on odds and ends of manuscript paper, and I had just completed a number for the violoncello. I pulled it out and asked Van what he thought of it. He looked it over and said:

"H'm! Not bad. Not bad at all. Really a nice, juicy little tune."

I asked him where he would be working, the following week, and he told me the Shepherd's Bush Empire.

"Aren't you in that sketch where you are asked what you are going to play and you reply, 'I will play you my latest solo, entitled'—whatever it may be?"

"Yes," he said. "That's the one."

"Now," I answered, "you just do what I say." And I told him to take my manuscript along with him, memorise it and play it.

"And when you come to that bit," I added, "you say 'my latest and *greatest* solo.' We'll call the thing 'Autumn Shadows.'"

He agreed to do so. I left him and went at once to a firm of publishers.

"Do you want to buy a van Biene solo?" I asked them.

"Is he playing it?"

"Yes. You can hear it next week at the Shepherd's Bush Empire." And I fixed an appointment.

They came, heard and were conquered, and I sold the solo for ten guineas advance royalty. The next week we worked it with another little thing I had written, and caught another publisher for ten guineas; and so it went on until we had roped in practically all the publishers in London.

But we were caught out at last. "Ombres de la Nuit" was bought by the Star Publishing Company, who published the thing the very next week. That

added our little nest-egg of five pounds a week each, for we did not dare to face any more publishers. But it was good while it lasted.

When I look at my copy of that "Shadows of the Night"—as Van and I had called it—I feel that there is a lesson for me somewhere in it.

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I doubt if many musicians to-day work as hard as we did then. Sometimes I had to fulfil as many as five engagements a day.

I played the 'cello in the orchestra of the first night club ever opened in London: the *Cave of the Golden Calf*, in Heddon Street. This meant that I caught the 6.30 train to my home at Finchley in the morning, having worked since lunch on the previous day. Four hours' sleep was my maximum then.

At the night club my fee was seven-and-six a night, and I was entitled to a share of the tips. The first week, I remember, that share came to eightpence!

This little band was the forerunner of the Jazz Band of to-day. It included Victor Vorzanger, Dave Comer, myself and Bert Earle. Bert played the banjo. He was an American, and a real "character" if ever I met one. He could play only in the key of G, but he had a personality that was dynamic, and amply made up for any technical shortcomings.

One night we were fulfilling an engagement for the Duke of Westminster, and when we had finished the programme Bert went up to him and said:

"O.K., Duke?"

His grace replied that everything had been perfectly satisfactory.

"Then now for some dough, Duke, eh?" said Bert.

The Duke, naturally, asked him to send in his account, but that did not suit Bert's book at all.

"You've had the goods, Duke," he answered, "so I'll be obliged if you'll cash in right now."

The Duke, fortunately, saw the funny side of it and cashed in, without a murmur, there and then.

Bert, later on, sought a fortune on the Continent, taking Dave Comer with him. His method was characteristic. He would march off to the best hotel in the place, without a bean, and book rooms. Then he would go off and look for work. He invariably found it, too, and with first class money every time. People simply could not resist that remarkable personality.

When I was at a loose end, one time, Bennett Scott, of the Star Music Company, offered me an engagement, which I held for a few months. But I could not seem to settle down to it, so I wrote to Black once more and asked him if he had anything for me. He replied that he could fix me up immediately on his best ship, which was the *Olympic*, of the White Star Line Southampton-New York service. I closed with that, and soon got into the swing of the work again. Then I had another letter from Black, offering to transfer me to the new *Titanic*, which was about to be launched.

He explained, however, that this ship would have a band of eight, whereas we were only five.

I thought this over. It meant sharing up the collections into smaller proportions, so I decided to stop where I was. Sometimes the collection reached as much as £100, and a fifth share of that was worth having.

And then one morning—it was April 15, 1912—we woke to find the *Olympic* going all out. There were rumours that the *Titanic* was in trouble and we were racing to reach her. About midday we suddenly slackened speed, and a notice appeared on all the notice boards.

“TITANIC sunk.”

She had struck an iceberg and gone down on her maiden voyage, with fearful loss of life.

When I got home, still feeling rather sick about it, I said to my wife: “What an escape I’ve had! Every member of that orchestra has gone down.”

She gave me a strange look, I remember, and answered:

“I don’t think you need bother yourself. I think you would have been found floating about somewhere.”

And, reflecting on the many escapes I have had, I sometimes wonder if she might not have proved right. But I was thankful that I had not been there, a witness, at least, of the worst sea disaster of modern times.

Shortly after this the *Olympic* was laid up for winter overhaul, and I thought I would try my luck once more as an instrumentalist and see if I could carve out a career for myself. But nothing

seemed to go right, for I took job after job and got sacked with depressing regularity. Something was wrong, quite definitely, but I could not diagnose it, and I felt frustrated and irritable.

Then one Sunday night, at a certain celebrated café, things came to a head. I lost my temper in an argument with the musical director and knocked him down. At that a minor storm broke out among the members of the orchestra, all of them foreigners, excepting myself. They were very antagonistic to me, and that is hardly surprising in view of the attitude I had taken up. They were probably wondering whose turn would come next.

One of the men, a German, addressed me with heavy sarcasm.

"I tell you vot it iss," he said. "You are such a clever fellow, Mr. Squire. If I were you I should go into bizz-iness for myself."

I turned and looked at him, but, contrary to his expectations, I did not hand him one. I felt as though a light had just broken over me.

The German had hit the nail on the head. That was what was wrong with me. Working for other people, like this, I was just a square peg in a round hole.

"My God!" I exclaimed. "You're right! I *will* go into bizz-iness for myself! I'll have an orchestra of my own, and what's more"—I glared round at the lot of them—"no damned foreigner shall ever play in it!"

I went home that night and, on paper, I created the personnel of the "J. H. Squire Octet" which, in course of time, was to materialise and become

almost a household word throughout this country and the Dominions. And I kept my vow to the satirical German, for no foreigner has ever played in it.

I read and re-read that sheet of paper. Here was the orchestra, but how should I find a job for it?

I wandered about, thinking things over and, a morning or two later I saw a copy of *The Stage* in a Public Library. In it Fred Karno advertised for a "super small orchestra" to play at the place known as Tagg's Island, Hampton Court. Karno had bought this and re-named it "The Karsino," and was about to open it as a place of amusement and restaurant combined.

I had met Karno in pantomime, up in Glasgow, so the next morning I made tracks for his offices in Camberwell.

"I've got the finest little orchestra in the world for you!" I said, thinking of that piece of paper in my pocket.

"Right!" replied Karno. "I'll hear it to-morrow."

I was apologetic.

"I'm afraid I can't fix it for to-morrow," I said. "We've several engagements to fulfil, you see. But you can hear it the day after to-morrow. Tell you what I'll do. You make the appointment and I'll telephone you the place where the audition is to be held."

He agreed to that, and I went out into the street again to do some more thinking. I walked into the Corner House for a cup of tea, an hour later, and there I came up against a man named Fred Moss, who was a member of a quartette composed of two

of his brothers, himself, and pianist. The combination was two violins, organ and piano, and I remembered that it was, at this time, causing a bit of a sensation at the Queen's Theatre in a play called *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford*.

I was in luck again. I told Fred Moss what I had in mind and he carted me round at once to talk to his brother Harold. I was so keen to get to work on this thing that I offered Harold Moss a half-share if it came off. I saw that, with his assistance, we could put up an excellent show.

The following day we got together for a rehearsal. In addition to the quartette there was I with my 'cello, a double bass player and a girl vocalist, Ivy Moore. We worked like niggers and pulled things into shape; but knowing that Karno was, above all, a showman I realised that he would never be content with ordinary orchestral work. It had to be "something different."

The time for the audition came and Karno was there. In the programme I played for him I introduced a selection from *Samson and Delilah*, and when it came to *Softly Awakes my Heart* Ivy, who was hidden behind a screen, sang it.

Karno was so delighted with the effect that he engaged me right off.

The contract was for twelve weeks, beginning on the opening day of the Karsino. We had to play twice daily, including Sundays, and the pay was £35 a week. That may not seem very profitable when compared with musicians' salaries to-day, but it meant more than mere money to me. I was an employer; I had gone into "bizz-iness for myself."

When it came to the actual date we struck a snag. It was found impossible to employ the same orchestra which had given the audition. But I managed to placate Karno, and we got through all right with the "new blood." However, it meant a lot of extra work for Harold Moss, the pianist and myself, for three of the new members had never played in an orchestra before. This turn of events, naturally, limited our repertoire, and we ultimately came down to ten numbers, to which were added solos by Harold Moss, on the violin, and by me, on the 'cello.

We accomplished the seemingly impossible, and got through our three months' engagement with those ten pieces, and if that does not show smart management I really do not know what does!

Karno, like Bert Earle, was always a "character." A man who—as he maintained—believed in value for money. It was his custom, before the War, to employ military bands at the Karsino on Sundays. On one occasion he wanted to engage the First Battalion of the Life Guards, but this could not be managed. I went to him and told him that I had made another fixture instead.

"And what have you got?" asked Karno.

"The Second Battalion," I said.

"What?" he exclaimed. "I pay for the best, don't I? And I want the best. No (sanguinary) seconds for me!"

I have never discovered, to this day, whether he was serious or not.

We had a very pleasant season working for him and then I ran up to London to see what might be doing

for the winter. Mark Blow was about to take the Queen's Theatre and he wanted two orchestras. I saw him and we arranged an audition for the following morning, so I brought my players to London. After three months of slogging away they were pretty good, and even hardened veterans at the job could not have put up a better show than my little lot did.

Mark Blow grew more and more enchanted with each number, and said so. It was very flattering, but scarcely good business, perhaps, from his point of view, for all the time he was talking like that the money was soaring up and up in my mind. Eventually he asked me my price and I (not without certain qualms) named it. He closed with it at once and gave me the contract to sign.

Our ten pieces had done it again.

CHAPTER XIII

I DO not remember the exact figure on the contract, but I know that after paying the boys' salaries (and that well in advance of the union rates at the time) Moss and I cleared £20 a week each. In those days the musical director in a West End theatre, playing entr'actes, thought himself handsomely paid at ten pounds a week, so we had reason to be proud of ourselves.

The play was *This Way, Madam* and it starred Maurice Farkoa in the leading rôle. It was at this theatre that Mark Blow and his brother, Sydney, introduced Tango Teas to London. By arrangement with the leading West End modistes, fashion parades were held, seasoned with exhibitions of the Tango by various Continental artistes. Admission was half-a-crown and tea was handed round to everybody. It packed the theatre every afternoon for three months, and women came in thousands.

Shortly after that Moss and I parted company and I began looking round again. I got together a fresh combination and secured a booking at the Prince of Wales Theatre. Two weeks later Jimmy Welch (the comedian) who was a great pal of mine, introduced me to Sir Charles Wyndham, and he engaged me as his musical director at the Criterion. In that way I obtained double theatre work, and altogether

it was very different from those empty days at Harringay, when I had waited, week after week, for a job, and had leapt up out of my chair every time I saw a telegraph boy in the road outside.

Then Tom B. Davis heard my sextet at the Prince of Wales' and engaged me as musical adviser on what amounted to my own terms. In fact, I was with Davis until he retired. We opened with him at the Apollo, and in the second week Vedrenne and Eadie were hunting me out, and two months later I was also musical adviser to that partnership at the Royalty. I stayed at that theatre for ten years.

When Vedrenne and Eadie split up and Vedrenne went over to the Little Theatre I supplied him with his orchestra while still carrying on my work at the Royalty.

Never once did either of them question my terms. They would simply ask: "How much?" and give me what I wanted.

In April, 1914, the Celeste Octet had its first engagement on the South Parade at Southsea. That engagement was also its first real chance, and it made the best of it. Sixteen years later I stood on the platform with the manager, F. B. Robson, shaking hands and acknowledging the applause of a packed house . . . on the Celeste's hundredth re-engagement at the Centenary Concert.

The winter over, the Karsino opened again and everything went swimmingly. We were all happy and the money was rolling in. My wife had taken

charge of my theatre work, so that was going on as well and swelling the exchequer. One way and another, life was very rosy indeed just then, and there seemed to be no reason why business shouldn't get better and better. But that showed how little we knew about it. There was trouble brewing: trouble for everybody, though few people guessed it then. Those who did were snubbed as scare-mongers and kill-joys.

The shock came. In August, 1914, war was declared between this country and Germany.

After the first feeling of surprise people did not seem to take it very seriously. Folk everywhere were saying: "It'll be all over in six months, my boy!" Had they been able to glimpse those four grizzly years ahead of them they would not have been so almighty cheerful about it.

We musicians, in common with plenty of other people, failed to realise that something tremendous had been started: something that would alter all our destinies, smash our hopes, even change the map of Europe. The ordinary, middle-aged citizen, of course, was still thinking in terms of the South African War, which had been too far away to cause him any real discomfort. For quite a long while his complacent slogan was "Business as Usual."

But after a time we all had to face things, without any possibility of deceiving ourselves. The first move to bring it home to us musicians was a reduction in salaries, as a result of a meeting of the West End Managers' Association. It was a choice between that and closing the theatres, apparently.

We came down to a bare minimum for theatre

work. All my boys stuck by me loyally and accepted cuts without a grumble; and in the orchestras there were people who are at the head of their profession to-day.

Robert Murchie, now the highest-salaried orchestral flautist in the country, I believe, was playing for me at the Criterion, and he gamely agreed to take five shillings a performance, which was all I could afford to pay him. Ferdinand Weist-Hill and James Levy (for ten years leader of the London String Quartette) also went on working for me at greatly reduced rates, and there must be many famous musicians to-day who smile when they remember those hard times and how they took their "cuts" with the rest of my lads.

Military bands, of course, were now required for strictly military duties, and this threatened to queer Karno's arrangements. I had a talk with him, and persuaded him to try another experiment instead. As a result, his Sunday performances were given by an orchestra of thirty performers, supplied by me. A tip-top orchestra it was, too. It included such men as Alf Brain, Fred James, Haydn Draper, Robert Murchie, Frank Reade, to say nothing of other first-class musicians. James Levy was the leader, and I am convinced that it was the finest orchestra of its size in existence.

When the war had been going on for a while the women, my wife among them, began to grow very patriotic. She pointed out to me that it would be to the credit of the family if somebody got into uniform. Possibly she visualised me being presented with one of those little white feathers which feminine

enthusiasts were handing out to males in mufti at that time. True, these ladies dropped some heavy bricks in that particular campaign, but it seemed a very popular movement with a section of the sex.

Anyway, I agreed to do what I could to escape that galling experience, and presented myself for enlistment. The M.O. had a good look at me, laughed and turned me down. I went to no less than fourteen recruiting offices, and the same thing happened every time. It appeared that I had done all my fighting. Nevertheless, I regard it as a benign miracle that I escaped the presentation of a white feather.

Well, at least I knew how I stood. It was music or nothing for me now.

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One day H. S. J. Booth, then a director of Ashton's, in Bond Street, came to me and asked for a ragtime band for the Popular Café, Piccadilly. I got together what became known as the Willoughby-Squire Quintet, and it consisted of Harry Willoughby (piano), Chris Neale and Bert Bassett (banjos), Dick de Pauw (violin) and Harry Robins, who afterwards became well-known as a drummer with Hylton and Henry Hall. Harry was only a kid at that time, and used to turn up dressed in a velvet "Lord Fauntleroy" suit.

This was actually the very first British Jazz band to play in public in this country, and it was so successful that it led to many requests for others, and really started the boom in Jazz. It was the sort

of music that met the needs of those feverish days. It helped people to forget the constant fear and anxiety in which they were forced to live. Those who condemned the new style of music were far too apt to overlook that important factor.

At this time T. B. Vaughan was a big man in the theatrical world, though he was never much in the public eye. I got to know him through Holman Clark and H. B. Irving, and "Tommy" and I became fast friends till he died. It was through him that I got several of my engagements, and I ultimately became musical director for no less than six West End theatres at once, and all for opposition managements! This is an unbroken record.

Vaughan also put me into the Playhouse with Gladys Cooper, and I remained with her for several seasons.

Some years later Gladys Cooper played in *Diplomacy* at a Command Performance, with Gerald du Maurier. I supplied the music on that occasion, and Sir Squire Bancroft, who was Master of Ceremonies, took me to the ante-room of the royal box and presented me to the King George V. It was at the end of the second act, I remember.

The King shook hands with me and said:

"Will you play the 'Doctrinen' waltz for me?"

I said I would, with pleasure, and added:

"This will be the second time, Your Majesty, that I've played it for you."

"Indeed?" he answered. "And when was the first time?"

I told him that I had been a member of the Commander-in-Chief's band at Portsmouth, twenty

years before, when he, as Duke of York, was staying there.

Things went splendidly after that. We were no longer king and subject, but two sailors, and we talked about the Navy as sailors always will, given half a chance. Ceremony was completely forgotten, and I am sure that the customary "sir" slipped entirely out of my vocabulary. Nobody could get a word in edgeways, and the curtain was ten minutes late in rising for the third act, in consequence.

Vaughan persuaded Sir James Barrie to let me conduct his ever-hardy *Peter Pan*, and for ten years, without a break, I occupied the conductor's seat at the Christmas production.

Edna Best was the "Peter" of the first year of my series, with Harry Ainley as Captain Hook. I think Ainley was the best of all the Hooks, for he grasped the humour of the part in a way nobody else seemed to do. Gerald du Maurier was great in the part, too, but he lacked the stature. Alfred Drayton was another very excellent Hook. A very noteworthy performance of the part was given by William Luff, the permanent understudy who always played the Pirate, "Chekko." In fact, I rank Luff among the star Hooks.

Gladys Cooper also played Peter, but I always thought her miscast in the part, though my opinion, obviously, was not widely shared, for she played to packed houses at every performance. Personally, I thought her too tall, for one thing.

Jean Forbes Robertson was the perfect Peter. She brought to it something ethereal that cannot be described. She had the longest run of any of them,



J. H. SQUIRE IN HIS GARDEN IN WHICH MANY OF HIS COMPOSITIONS WERE WRITTEN

and it is not to be wondered at, for it was an unusual and very beautiful performance.

I never think of the late Sir James Barrie without recalling one extraordinary remark he made to me, years ago, round about this time. It happened at the St. James's Theatre, during my first rehearsal of *Peter Pan*.

It was a final dress rehearsal. We had made certain changes in the music, and the orchestra had been playing for six solid hours. We had only six bars more to play—say a matter of ten seconds—when something went wrong with the lighting.

We stopped, and it looked as though the necessary adjustment would take some time. Vaughan came down to me in the orchestra and said: "While they're attending to this you go over to Barrie and ask him if the music is satisfactory in its reduced form, will you?"

I went over, a little exhausted after my strenuous six hours, but still polite.

"I trust that the music is satisfactory, Sir James?" I said.

"Yes, Mr. Squire," replied the great little man. "Quite satisfactory—*up to now*."

What he thought might occur in those final six bars I have no idea; but the trouble with Barrie was that one never knew when he was indulging in some extensive leg-pulling. For all I know, this may have looked to him like a heaven-sent occasion.

Alfred Riess, brother of Percy Riess, at one time musical director to J. Lyons and Company, put a good deal of work in my way, and he eventually came to me, telling me that he was going to start

an agency and offering me a partnership on my own terms. And there I made one of the biggest mistakes of my life.

I knew that Riess's connexion was small and that he was coming into the hardest and most competitive of businesses, and I felt nervous about it. I argued it out with myself and decided that I might have to do a good deal of the work for a split in problematical profits, and I was not prepared to take a chance on it. I never came to a more unwise decision. To-day Alfred Riess is the head of the National Entertainment Association, with a good connexion, a flat in town and a house in the country. He has the orchestras on practically all the famous steamship lines, with a salary list running into thousands a month.

And half of what that means might have been mine!

The year 1916 was a memorable one for me. My wife was taken ill and died, and soon after that the doctor reported that my mother was failing rapidly. She was eighty-three, and she had had a stroke, so I realised that it would not be long, in any case, before I lost her. But I was thankful for one thing: at least I could give her comforts at the end. She had always been a splendid mother to me, and I had never forgotten her endless patience with me, and the way in which she had stood by me in my luckless days. She had always tried to take the brunt of my troubles, just as she had come between me and my father at the time of that significant beating which started me on my rough-and-tumble life.

I had her taken to a nursing home and surrounded her with every sort of attention I could think of; but for a long while I am afraid she knew nothing about them.

Then, one day, she opened her eyes and looked round at the big, pleasant room, at the flowers, and at me, seated there beside her bed.

She spoke, for the first time in a long while.

"This is a very beautiful place, Jack," she whispered.

"Do you like it, mother?"

"Yes, dear." And then the housewife in her came to the surface and she added: "But how much is it costing?"

I patted her hand.

"Don't you worry about that," I answered. "I've turned the corner, mother. I shall make my first thousand this year."

Her old eyes smiled up at me.

"My boy! It's very, very sweet of you to say so. . . . But of course it isn't true."

She died the next day.

That was the supreme tragedy of my life. Poor Mother! She had never known what it was to have more than three pounds a week; but I have always been glad to think that I was able to give her those comforts at the end.

Her death made a terrible difference to me. I tried to smother my grief by working harder than ever; and I drank, too—much more than was good for me. Sometimes the hackneyed old phrase "like a ship without a rudder" would come to my mind,

and I knew now why those words had been applied to human beings.

I missed that dear soul at every turn, and for a long while my wretchedness and loneliness were well-nigh unbearable. My health began to suffer, and my doctor told me, quite frankly, that if I did not go more easily I should have a serious breakdown.

That was the very last thing I wanted, so I took his advice and went to Matlock to recuperate. I mooned about there, as I had done in London, and the hostess of the Hydro, whom I had known for some years, did her best to shake me out of my moroseness. One day she said to me:

"I've got some London people here to-day for you to talk to. Why not come along?"

"London people?" I answered. "Lord! I've been seeing London people every day for years! Haven't you anything else you can try on me?"

"All right, then," she said. "Come and meet the provinces if that will suit you better." And she led me across the lounge to a table where two girls were seated.

"Sisters!" she whispered, and then she introduced me.

The younger one made some remark to me and I sat down opposite her. Her voice was pleasant and attractive.

As she talked I found myself looking at her intently. She had the brightest, clearest grey-blue eyes I had ever seen and I could not take my own eyes off them. There was a lovely clean frankness about them that had the strangest effect on me. I had never been much of a hand at talking to women

I did not know well; in fact, I think it was usually my habit to fight shy of them, but I felt nothing of that now.

I felt . . . how shall I put it? . . . the first sense of comfort and companionship I had known for months. I felt as though I had known this girl all my life.

I sat beside her again at dinner that evening, and we went on talking where we had left off. And even when we were not bothering to talk at all that feeling of comfort was still there.

I was in a queer, rather jumpy state all the next day, and after dinner I decided to have a turn round the garden by myself, to pull myself together. It was a fine garden with long, sheltered paths and, as I was walking along one of them I saw this girl coming towards me in the twilight.

My thoughts began to race, even as we moved slowly towards each other. I could see her clearly now, and the realisation came to me, with a shock, that I had only a few more days here. Very soon I should have to go back to London and leave . . . all this.

How could I?

Suddenly I was conscious of a feeling of longing and desperation, just as I had felt it that night, years ago, when, as a boy in South America, I had looked through the little window at that patch of velvet sky. I knew that I could not bear the thought of never seeing her again.

We were quite close to each other now, and we both stood still. She looked into my face and that was enough for me. I put out my hand and, catching hers, drew her to me.

"No, I can't!" I said.

"Can't what?" she whispered, smiling.

"Can't let you go," I answered. "You belong to me now, my girl—and from now on!"

She did not dispute it.

We were married soon after that. It was quick work, and the best thing I ever did.

With this new incentive I went ahead faster than ever. Very soon I was making between five and six thousand a year. I came to the conclusion that I had had enough of personally conducting the Karsino orchestra, so I put in another man. I still retained management, however, and at this point I received a compliment that really touched me.

The new conductor approached every member of the orchestra with the offer that he should continue under the new régime, but, one and all, they made excuses.

"Why on earth did you do that?" I asked them when I heard what had happened.

"Well," replied the spokesman, "you see, we all feel that it wouldn't be the same."

I remember another example of loyalty which made a great impression on me. It concerns Frank Reade, who, at the time of the story, was pianist of the Celeste Octet, having succeeded to that position on the death of my first wife. Frank, one night, was in charge of the Apollo orchestra when a lady leaned over the orchestral rail and said:

"Will you come and see me at Selfridge's tomorrow? I should like you to bring a combination like this to play for us in the restaurant there."

Many men would have jumped at the chance, been on the interviewing mat in the morning and snaffled the job—and thought themselves smart for doing it. But not Frank. He answered: "I'm sorry, but this is Mr. Squire's orchestra, you know. You should get in touch with him."

This was done and resulted in a position which I held for many years. But I was resolved to do something to acknowledge Frank's scrupulous honesty in this business and I said to him:

"Well, Frank, you've been very straight with me and I don't forget a thing like that. We've got the job. I'm going to pay you the ordinary pianist's salary, but you'll also get a third share of the profits."

Frank was delighted and vowed, on the spot, that he would save every penny, above his living expenses, that he made on the Selfridge job. We started there as a Trio, but grew, in time, to four regular bands; and Frank kept to his resolve. By the end of his time there he had saved more than two thousand pounds! And he deserved every penny of it.

Frank was a fine pianist, a true friend and one of the most steadfast men it has ever been my lot to meet.

By now I had eighteen orchestras working for me, and my wife and I entertained a great deal at our house in Putney. We had some marvellous evenings there, with all sorts of interesting people dropping in. Charlie Williams, Clem Harvey and Claude Rains used to come round after the theatre, and these three certainly were an addition to the

entertainment side of our parties. Charlie's beautiful playing on the violin, Clem's extraordinary versatility at the piano and Claude Raine's recitations—what a voice that man had!—used to hold us all spellbound. Claude, of course, has since made a great name for himself in the "talkies," and his clever, clean-cut face is known to millions on the screen.

Charlie Williams had personality and a wonderful charm in his playing. Nobody could touch him in a number like the Chopin-Sarasate *Nocturne*. It was unforgettable.

There is one party anecdote of Clem which, though maybe of a somewhat delicate nature, should be told.

One night Clem, having supped well, and feeling that a little relaxation was indicated, removed his dentures. There was, of course, nothing in the least stilted about our parties, as may be guessed.

My wife asked him to play something for us, and Clem, hastily putting back his fixtures, went over to the piano and began. As usual, he played magnificently and I sat back with closed eyes to enjoy the music to the full.

All at once my neighbour nudged me and whispered:

"For God's sake, look at Clem! Do you think he's all right?"

I looked. Clem was still playing divinely, but he was making such appalling and varied grimaces that I began to share the general alarm.

It subsequently transpired that, in his hurry, he had put the top set at the bottom and *vice versa*

and, not realising what was wrong, was trying to bite them into position!

I think we squeezed every ounce of enjoyment out of those days at Putney. I know that I felt sometimes that I must be one of the most fortunate men in this old world. I had success, money, a wonderful wife and two baby girls. Their names were Barbara Ann and Dorothy June, and we doted on the pair of them. I used to amuse myself sometimes by thinking out all sorts of plans for their future. I may have had a rough passage but nothing like that was going to happen to *my* kids. It seemed impossible to me then that anything could go wrong.

But go wrong it did. Theatres which I had regarded as mine for life changed management and in less than three weeks my sixteen orchestras were closed down.

I simply could not realise what had happened at first. The news staggered me. To make things worse than ever it was just before Christmas and I could not endure the thought of saying anything about it at home. Somehow I managed to keep the worry out of my face and voice, I suppose, for my wife did not guess. I spent awful hours wondering how I was ever going to tell her.

The bills rolled in. There were always plenty of bills; but this time they were unpaid. Christmas came and went, and I had managed to laugh my way through it as usual. Now my birthday was due and with a feeling of acutest unhappiness I watched my wife begin the yearly preparations for a slap-up party. Then I knew that I had to tell her.

I did it as gently as I could, but a job like that takes more finesse than I, for one, possess.

"But what does it mean, Jack?"

"It means, my dear, that we're broke." I looked round the pretty room. "All this . . . will have to go."

"You mean that we'll be sold up?"

"Yes. It means just that."

She sat quietly in her chair, crying a little.

"What can I say, my dear?" I put my arm round her. "I never wanted to make you cry. That's the most dreadful part of it all. I always wanted to give you so much. You know that."

She looked up at me.

"No, I mustn't cry," she said. "I didn't mean to cry, Jack. It was the—the shock. You mustn't mind that. You've had a bit of time to get used to the idea, you see, and I haven't. I'm all right now. The smile came back again. "But what about your birthday party?"

"Party?" I answered. "There can't be any party now."

"Why not?"

"Eh?"

"Yes. Why not? If we're going to sell up everything to pay those bills what earthly difference is fifty pounds going to make, one way or the other? Jack, you've *got* to have that party!"

CHAPTER XIV

WE gave the party, and a beauty it was, too. We went out with flying colours. Daimlers were hired to fetch the guests and take them home, and there was any amount of champagne. As I looked round on the crowd I could almost hear people thinking: "How well Squire must be doing!"

Now and then I would catch my wife's eye and we smiled at each other, sharing the joke. Just for that one night we were not worrying.

It was morning before the last guests went, still without an inkling of the truth.

Five days later the auctioneer came in and our lovely home went under the hammer. As I walked out of the house for the last time I said to my wife: "Never mind, my dear. We'll build it all up again. You'll see."

With our two baby girls we went into furnished apartments in a side street near Victoria Station, and the fight was on.

I had never forgotten that chance remark about the gramophone sessions. In fact, every month for years I had been calling round to see Arthur Brooks, of the Columbia Gramophone Company, and though he had been very charming to me, he had told me, time after time, that there was nothing for me.

But the visits had become a habit by now, and I kept them up.

I was coming back from my usual fruitless call there one day when I met a friend in the bus, and he told me there was talk of opening an exclusive Picture Theatre, near Buckingham Palace. That, I decided, called for good music.

I got an introduction to the managing director. It took me more than three months to work the trick, but in the end he engaged the Celeste Octet at a fee of a hundred and twenty guineas a week with a twelve months' contract.

That day I went home in fine spirits. First round to me.

Charlie Williams was my right-hand man, and at that time he was one of the highest paid violinists in the small orchestra business. His weekly cheque from me was £32 15s. Clem Harvey was the pianist, and these two could have put over a great show even with a crowd of duds—which we certainly were not. Charlie, in fact, was a genius at putting a show over. I well remember one particular night at Southsea, and it shows Charlie's quality. I had some important letters to write, and I happened to mention this just as Charlie was going on for his solo turn.

"You run over to the hotel, then, and do them, Jack," he said. "I'll hold them till you come back."

When I returned, thirty-five minutes later, Charlie was still "holding them," bowing to a frenziedly enthusiastic crowd of 3,000 people at the end of his sixth encore.

"No more, Jack," he said. "I'm too tired." And with that we played the last number.

Charlie left me to take a bigger job, and Mayer Gordon succeeded him. Gordon was a great fiddler. His technique was almost uncanny, while his tone and phrasing were beyond criticism. His memory, too, was prodigious. Here was a man who would be prepared to play a dozen of the best-known concertos within a fortnight, and all from memory. And Gordon's playing *was* playing: not a mere "running through."

To-day he makes thousands a year on the Radio in America, with a couple of limousines to add to his comfort. Good luck to him!

Clement Harvey, the hero of the party episode, was a First Prize, Leipsic; a degree which makes A.R.C.M. and L.R.A.M. look like mere trifles. He was toured through Australia, by Hugo Gorlitz, as soloist with Kubelik.

Thanks to the help of such men the Octet was making headway again, and before long I was back in the theatres with a four-figure income.

At this time there was a lot of speculation about the new wonder, Wireless, and that suggested a fresh opening to me. I secured an appointment with Mr. Rex Palmer, at Savoy Hill, and felt quite cheerful about the prospects. But I was not giving up the gramophone idea on account of that, and, on my way to see Mr. Palmer, I decided to pay one of my periodic (might I say almost social?) visits to the Columbia premises.

When I got there, to my amazement, they were

Not at Home to me. In others word, the lift-man told me that I was not to be taken up. I suppose they felt that they had had about enough of me. Possibly one does grow a little weary of a caller who drops in, uninvited, every week for years.

I came out of the door feeling distinctly crushed, and began to walk rather drearily round the building. Then I spotted a fire-escape, and in two seconds I was going up.

I stopped outside the window of Arthur Brooks's office, but the place was empty. I tried the window, but it was fastened on the inside, so there was only one thing for me to do. I smashed the glass and walked into the office.

The appalling crash brought Brooks hotfoot from an inner room.

"Who smashed that window?" he demanded.

Well, there was I, and there was the window—or what remained of it. I emulated George Washington who, I believe, once found himself in a similar situation with an axe.

"I did," I said. And then I added: "But I'll pay for it."

Luckily for me, Brooks was a man with a sense of humour.

"I'll get rid of *you*, then, once and for all," he answered. "I'll give you a trial session."

"That," I said, in the voice of reason, "is what I've been asking you for—for about twelve years." And we fixed up the date. Then I brushed myself down and resumed my interrupted journey to Savoy Hill.

There Mr. Palmer gave me a date to play in the studio, a few Sundays ahead, with a trial fee of ten

guineas, to be advanced to twenty if a re-engagement materialised. The pay for broadcasting was never large, and my eventual twenty-five guineas was far in advance of the sum obtained by any other octet; and of course many more sprang up, after a while.

That first engagement was a great success and we went back to Savoy Hill many times. It was a cheery, free-and-easy place, and there was none of the red tape which distinguishes the larger and more autocratic Broadcasting House. One was an individual at Savoy Hill, to be greeted with some such remark as: "Hello, old man! Glad to see you." I seriously doubt if that happens to broadcast artistes nowadays!

The first gramophone record, too, came out well, and was followed by a number of others. Stephen Evans was a leader with a real "solo tone," and he was with us in all the most successful records we made. His playing of the slow movement in our *Memories of Mendelssohn* was a beautiful bit of work.

I found that my records were rapidly becoming best-sellers, and other companies began to make advances to the Octet; so I went to Arthur Brooks and told him frankly that I wanted more money. The result was that I received royalties, in addition to my fees. This, I think, is the only instance of its kind, for it is customary for conductors to get fees only. Anyway, it was a paying thing for me. Sometimes the royalties (at fourpence a copy) ran into thousands of pounds. Many records, for instance, reached a sale of 100,000.

By now, of course, the Octet was a very different combination from the one which had made its first

bow at Southsea. Brilliant men passed through my hands from time to time. There was Sidney Crooke, the Datas of the keyboard, who could go through a whole week's programmes, twice daily, without any prompting from printed notes; Bertie Lodge, who played the very first double bass concerto ever heard "on the air"; Teddie Malkin, the only real Mustel organ player in this country. (To try a man out for Mustel work, ask him to close the "swells" and play double *forte*, with the "expression" stop only—and see how many can do it!)

There was Gershom Parkington, whose vivid personality had as much to do with the success of the show—especially on the "halls"—as any other item in it; Leonard Rubens (of the Brosa Quartet) whose viola playing was always a real joy; Bernard Reille, later to become leader of the B.B.C. Variety Orchestra, Willie Sear, one of the finest "repets" who ever held a fiddle, and Phillippe Willoughby.

Phil was a pianist as well as a fiddler, and he could write for the piano. He arranged all the biggest selling records we ever made when we worked for Gramophone companies. I cannot speak too highly of Phil: not only as a musician but as a friend. He has stood by me in the black times as well as in the good ones, and I bless him for it.

With this personnel the Octet started on the halls and topped the bill everywhere. We played at the Chappell, Boosey and Cramer Ballad Concerts—all rival concerns and in the same season—thus breaking a stubborn tradition, and establishing a record. Our broadcasting was at every main station of the B.B.C. from London to Bournemouth, via



TOM JENKINS

Belfast and Aberdeen, and our gramophone records have been manufactured in sixteen different countries. Certainly a far cry from the initial Southsea effort.

In fact, that opening concert of ours had nightmare qualities which I, for one, am not likely to forget.

Our leader then was Willie Hodgson, a good, sound fiddler of the "robust" type. Bill's memory, too, was a marvel. He could memorise any number after a couple of readings and he never needed music for any concert.

But it was Bill's sartorial ambitions which nearly succeeded in upsetting the applecart on that occasion. To start with, we all had the "first night" feeling, and were extremely liable to be disturbed by complications. Bill wanted to be a real credit to the party on this, its first appearance, and to that end he ordered a new dress suit.

To his confusion, when it arrived he found that the tailor had put in the wrong pair of trousers. There was no time to do anything about it and Bill appeared in pants about five inches too short.

"What in the world am I to do?" he asked, visualising himself displaying all sorts of rather mundane *et ceteras* to the audience.

We got over the difficulty by arranging a group of flowerpots in front of his legs and forbidding him to move until the curtain came down. But every time one of us caught sight of Bill's extremities, during that performance, hysteria threatened.

Eventually there was a bit of a "dust up" with the B.B.C. and I left. I did not go back for eighteen

months. At the end of that time Pedro Tillett invited me to return, and I started broadcasting again. The popularity of this work, and of our records, was such that engagements poured in and my bank balance took on a very healthy look. But illness got hold of me again, and—of all times—in the middle of my first talking picture. I just managed to finish the picture, but my wife was sent for and came post-haste in the car to fetch me. When I got home I collapsed.

The doctors diagnosed anaemia and severe gastric trouble, and sentenced me to death forthwith. Six months, at most, was their verdict.

I lay there in bed, a wreck of a man in a state of coma. An extra nurse was sent for, and my wife, in the next room with the door ajar heard and saw what happened when this young woman arrived.

The new arrival came in, gave me the "once over" and remarked to her colleague:

"Oh, is *that* the case? Why, I thought it was going to be a long job! I shall only have to wash the corpse and I shall still be in time for the pictures."

I am afraid I disappointed her. My eldest son offered himself for a blood transfusion, and the doctors agreed to try it. I was feeling wretched, but my business sense was far from dead, and I said to my wife:

"Look here, if I do get through this little affair there's publicity in it. If I don't peg out you ring up the Press Association at once and tell them to send out a photographer."

The transfusion was a success; and the picture was in all the Sunday newspapers.

What grand nursing I had, to be sure! My wife and the doctor worked marvels on me. That woman's patience was a thing of wonder, and I think I was as trying as most invalids. I never heard a grumble or saw a despairing look, and if she had her nasty moments (and I knew she had, later on) I was never allowed to hear about them.

Then there was Bertie Lodge, of the Octet, always ready to do his bit. Every morning, rain or shine, there was Bertie on the doorstep, positively asking to be sent on errands, no matter what. And anybody who has had experience of invalids and invalidism will recognise in that the supreme act of friendship! And Bertie did more than that. I put him in charge of the Southsea summer orchestra when Charlie Williams left me, and he saw the season through admirably. My brain was quite clear, after that first coma passed, and I was able to organise an orchestra for the run of a musical play called *Lumber Love* at the Lyceum. Howard Talbot was the conductor, but the indomitable Bertie was the real boss, drawing the money each week and paying the salaries for me.

Bertie was always ambitious; but he was also something better, for he possessed that quality which makes ambition practical. To-day he is Musical Director for two separate municipalities, and I believe that is a record.

I owed much of my peace of mind and recovery to Bertie, but it was fully ten months before I was able to start work again. The enemy, "John Barley-corn," had been at the root of my trouble. My job had taken me frequently into saloon bars, which were the worst possible places for me, as I had

discovered. I stayed "on the wagon" for about a year, and then I thought it would be safe to have a drink, so I walked into a bar and ordered a double scotch.

When I told my doctor he said: "Well, that one won't do you any harm. It's the second you've got to beware of."

But I behaved like a fool and disregarded his advice. Very soon I was drinking as hard as ever, with the expected result. The doctor blew me up handsomely, as I deserved.

"You talk about will-power!" he said. "But the truth is that you haven't got any."

That stung me. I determined to develop some, and every day I would sit down at home with a decanter and a glass in front of me.

"Now, you swine!" I would address the exhibits aloud, "are you going to beat me, or am I going to beat you?"

It was as stiff a fight as ever I had put up. Time after time I found that I had filled the glass and carried it nearly to my mouth, but at that point, sweating with the effort, I would fling the contents in the fire and go out for a sharp walk. I won in the end, and from that time I have been practically an abstainer. Spirits have been cut out entirely.

During my illness, of course, I had not been able to fulfil any engagements with my Octet, but when I was on the road to recovery I met a man who reminded me of one very interesting episode. It gave me a lot to think about.

This man, who was seated beside me in the tube one day, fell into conversation with me.

"I know you," he said, looking hard at me. "I've heard you play."

"Where?" I asked.

"In Devonshire."

For the moment I was puzzled.

"I can't recollect an engagement in Devonshire," I answered.

"Dartmoor!" he said, smiling.

And then I remembered . . . The Men on the Moor.

We had given a concert for the convicts: an extraordinary experience. There were eight hundred of them present, with twenty murderers in the front row.

We played for an hour and forty minutes on end, and never have I known such an audience. Every note, one felt, sank in; every phrase, every shade of feeling was marked. It was one of the most moving and vivid things I have ever lived through. When we came to the end of our programme great drops of sweat were trickling down our faces.

We gave those men our best, and it was appreciated as nobody had ever appreciated it before. For our last item we played "Love's Old, Sweet Song" and every voice joined in. My wife, seated in the gallery at the back with the other women visitors, was in tears, and she was not the only one.

Afterwards I had a talk with the man who was Prison Governor at that time, and he made a remark I have never forgotten.

"The real reason why most of these men are here," he said, "can be put into three words—Spirit of Adventure."

I repeated that remark to my companion in the tube and he nodded.

"That's about it. A lot of us aren't blackguards at heart, by any means. It's the adventure that gets us. When I heard you that time I was doing my fifth stretch for burglary. And why?" His face grew tense. "Because I can't resist the excitement of it. You've no idea what it's like . . . moving about in the dark, waiting for a door to open, for a footstep . . . for something that may mean, if you aren't careful, another stretch. I tell you, it's got into my blood!"

An adventurous soul with a "twist," maybe. Or just a man who had been denied ordinary, wholesome outlets for his natural instincts?

As I looked at him I remember thinking that if he had lived a life like mine he wouldn't have felt any need to go creeping about other people's houses at night. Fundamentally he was a very decent fellow, and he talked interestingly when we had lunch together, a day or two later.

There was another queer case of three officers I knew during the War. One was a viscount, and when hostilities came to an end he was very reluctant to lose sight of the other two, for they had all been close pals throughout. Before they parted he invited them both to shoot at his country place.

"It's very good of you, old chap," said the first man, "but I won't, if you don't mind. You see, I'm a schoolmaster in ordinary life, and I've just got to settle down to my job again. It would only unsettle me to step into another atmosphere."

"I'm sorry," said Lord X. "But how about you?" he added, to the other man.

This fellow shook his head.

"Afraid it can't be done. You see, I'm going back to my job too."

"And what's yours?"

There was an almost imperceptible pause.

"I'm a burglar," he answered.

Here was a man who had done well in the War and was interesting and conventional enough, in ordinary ways, to make himself the valued friend of a peer and a schoolmaster!

Those three parted with curiously mixed feelings, and certainly with some startling new conceptions of life.

I was very interested to hear, some time ago, that someone in Parliament was agitating for more music in our prisons. I am all for it. The Dartmoor occasion was not the only time we have played to prisoners, and my experience has shown me how valuable it is. Music in my opinion, is an absolute necessity to people in this difficult and unnatural position. It has a humanising effect. The new idea is to turn the men out better than when they went in, and a liberal education in good music, obviously, is going to help in that. When we were coming away from Dartmoor, I remember, we were all rather quiet—too moved for much comment. Then John Moore, our 'cellist, spoke.

"Well, we've played everywhere," he said, "but to-day, somehow, it feels as if we've done something really worth while."

Music-hunger is part of the make-up of *homo sapiens*, in prison or out of it, among highbrows and lowbrows. The "Bach fan," the whistling errand

boy and the inveterate singer in the bath have that much in common, whether they admit it or not. I recollect a remark a woman once made to me: an ordinary, domesticated woman with no pretensions to "artiness" in any form.

"If I have to go a long time without hearing some decent music," she said, "I feel as if I'm suffering from some sort of deficiency disease!"

I think that woman uttered a deeper truth than she knew.

People who are contemplating prison entertainment have to remember one thing, however, whether they are giving music or anything else. It is a mistake to think that one must "talk down" to prisoners. Any hint of that or of patronage is a great mistake. A friend of ours once gave a lecture to women prisoners and, when it was over, the authorities congratulated her on the fact that she had avoided this fault. She had spoken as an interested woman to her fellows, with wonderful effect. It took these unfortunate folk out of themselves, removed the sense of inferiority that their conditions—surely?—must induce. She herself was amazed at her reception and the intensity of interest in her audience, for the subject was a specialised one. She was smart enough to realise that, in the community she was addressing, there would be people as educated and intelligent as herself, and that plenty of the others would be in a state of mind in which new ideas are a god-send.

In fact, the individual who looks on prison work as a sort of glorified "slumming" is making the error of his life.

CHAPTER XV

AS a rule I have had to work hard for what I make, but there was one occasion when that golden dream of "Money for Nothing" really came true in my case.

A wealthy Italian family got in touch with me and offered me an engagement to play, for one hour, at the wedding reception of the daughter of the house. They asked me what my fee would be and I said five hundred pounds, with first class fare both ways. They agreed.

Gershom Parkington was my 'cellist at that time, and I was prepared to put over a very good show. I decided, too, that I might combine business with pleasure, as I had relatives living in Rome, where this particular family resided. I told my patron that I should be coming over a week ahead of the engagement and specified the route.

When my wife and I got to Gibraltar I found a telegram waiting for me. The wedding, it said, had been postponed, but I was asked to call at the house as soon as I reached Rome.

I cabled to Parkington, telling him to cancel all arrangements, and then, considerably puzzled, I went on. When my relative met me I told him what had happened and asked him what it was all about. He was very discreet.

"I happen to know," he said, "but I won't tell you now. Wait till after you've seen them. But I can put you wise to one thing, anyway. Whatever reason they give you won't be the real one!"

I called at the house. The Italian gentleman was very apologetic, of course, and he explained that the bride-to-be was ill. She had concussion, he said, as the result of an unfortunate dive in the bathing-pool. There was no knowing when the marriage would take place, in consequence.

It was a most convincing story and I expressed suitable regret. At that I was handed my money; all in very dirty English pound notes. The interview terminated with mutual politeness and I went back to my host, curious to get at the real facts. I am not doing that Italian any injury by telling them now, for he died some years ago.

My sympathy with the bride had been misplaced, it seems. The truth is that Mussolini had put his foot down on the project of an imported orchestra. That, needless to say, settled the matter. I was five hundred pounds in pocket, with a holiday to the good, without playing a single bar. There was never the slightest attempt to quibble about the fee.

With regard to money-making in general, I often think that I might have done rather well for myself in the advertising line, had I not chosen to be a musician when I left the Navy. A man I know, the head of a prominent theatrical advertising firm, once suggested that I should go in with him.

"If you'll consider it," he said, "there's plenty of cash in it for you. You can start at five hundred a year, and after a bit I'll run it up to four figures."

"Yes, but what's the first figure of the four?" I asked, somewhat pertinently.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "We'll make it twelve hundred."

He went on to elaborate his interesting scheme for me.

"It's quite simple. In fact, what you might call a cushy job. You'll get to the office at ten."

"Yes?" I prompted.

"Then at about half past you'll knock on my door and I shall tell you what to do. You'll be able to catch the six o'clock train home and, in addition, there would be a full month's holiday every year. What about it?"

"I knew there was a catch in it somewhere," I answered.

"Catch? What do you mean? Where's the catch?"

"Why, knocking on your door at half past ten and being told what to do. If I take the job you'll be knocking on *my* door and I shall tell *you* what to do!"

I knew by then that taking orders from somebody else is not my strong point. The old German fellow, years ago, had put me wise to that!

During my long period as musical director at Selfridge's I had several fine chances as a sort of showman-advertiser. Once, I remember, the firm wanted a stunt that would impress the folk in the East End. I hit on the notion of two smartly uniformed bands playing turn and turn about all day and driven through the streets in placarded lorries. I engaged the musicians myself and saw to

it that the bands were really good ones; and that, I am sure, is the secret of the success of the plan, for it worked like magic. Good music, well played, is a sure draw, East End or West End, among rich or poor. A street-musician I know—a man who plays the accordion like a master—told me recently that it is quite a common thing in the poorest districts for someone to run out of a house with a penny and a request to him to play one of the classics. True, the title or composer are seldom known, and the clue has to be helped out by humming, but the wish for “something nice” is there, as the penny in the work-worn hand testifies. And that in a district where a penny really means something.

I was also asked to provide a novel musical feature for Anniversary Week at Selfridge's. At that time there was only one orchestra employed, so I engaged one for each floor. These orchestras played in turn, one following the other without any pause. As one floor completed its part of a selection the floor above took it up, sometimes in the middle of a piece. The timing was perfect, and was done by light signals. The microphone system had not been invented then. The originality of the scheme attracted a lot of public attention.

When I was in America I met George Gould, the millionaire. He was a very likable man, quite unspoiled by his wealth. He took a fancy to me because I never tried to borrow from him; and that, I gathered, made me distinctly unusual.

One day I came across him in a street-car in New York and he said: “Hullo, English! Now, look here, why can't you find me a really smart idea? I'm

figuring that brain-box of yours ought to function, some time, and give me a good one. What about it?"

George, like most millionaires, was always looking for a chance to make another two or three. And, like most Americans, he cherished a conviction that the British were a bit short on notions.

"Oh, I've got one for you," I answered, "but you and your pals couldn't find enough cash to finance it."

That got George Gould on the raw.

"What d'you mean? Why, if it's good enough I could get enough to pave Yellowstone Park with gold!"

"It's a bigger scheme than that," I said.

He sat up.

"Let's have it. The dollars are waiting."

"Well, why don't you and some of your smart friends try this? Bottle up the Gulf Stream and let it off to Europe at so much a gallon."

A glint came into his eye. For a moment he was silent, and then he slapped his knee.

"Oh, boy! What an idea! And it *could* be done!" His face fell. "But you're right about the cost. You win, English. I'll pay for the drinks. Come on."

He paid for the drinks; and never again did he taunt me with any national dearth of notions.

I think that artists in general are more business-like than they were in the old days. Even artists must live, and there is not so much of the "art for art's sake" feeling as there used to be. Whether this is a good or bad trait may be a subject for heated discussion, but, for my part, I have never been able to see why a man who meets a public need—whether

it be for pills or painting, cement or 'cello-playing—should not get the best price he can for his wares.

A few years ago the manager of Boosey's publishing house got in touch with me and told me that his firm had an eye on any future compositions of mine. He promised me that it would be well worth my while.

"Then I must have a thousand pounds down, advance royalty," I replied, "before I write a note."

That startled him.

"But that's more than Sullivan got!" he exclaimed.

I stuck to my point, and I got my thousand. In that way I obtained the highest advance royalty ever paid to a composer.

While all this was going on my wife was waiting outside in the car. When I emerged from the building she gave me the sort of look which all husbands know.

"You said you were going to be ten minutes," she said, "and you've been an hour and a half. What *have* you been doing?"

"Business, my dear!" I answered, with that pomposity which (I feel sure) all wives know. "Just business."

The atmosphere remained somewhat frigid, so I added: "Well, let's run round to a shop I have in mind. Maybe that'll put things right."

She came out of that shop wearing a three hundred pound coat and acknowledging that I had made amends in the best tradition. Had she been the most exacting of wives I scarcely think she would

have complained about waiting at the rate of three guineas a minute.

Fate, however, still had something up her sleeve for me, and she was in a bad mood when she brought it out.

My wife fell ill, and the horrible anxiety I felt did not do much to help musical composition. Besides, I had not yet recovered completely from my second breakdown. I began to feel the pinch; money was pouring out and not much coming in. Months of inactivity, with family expenses and doctors' bills running on. To make matters worse, a good deal of my spare cash was invested in America, and when the Wall Street smash came I lost £12,000 in one night.

When I learned that I felt as though I really had touched rock bottom.

How could I possibly tell my wife? But it had to be done. For the second time I must break the news to her that we were broke.

It was all the worse because, in the meantime, we had moved into a larger house. It was a delightful place with a garden that was a thing of beauty. I had spent nearly two thousand on the garden alone. I loved that garden; in fact, I wrote a series of compositions with it as my theme: *The Scent of the Jasmine*, *The Song of the Waterfall*, *The Opening of the Daffodils* and *The Music of the Fountain*.

The thought of giving up everything was intolerable, but I had to face it. We had been sitting on top of the world . . . and now we had come down, hard and quick.

I walked about my "den," wondering how I was going to tell her, and at last I summoned up enough courage to call her in.

I had expected tears; but this time there were none. She heard me out and then asked, very quietly:

"How much have you lost in that smash?"

I named the amount, and she walked over to the bell by the fireplace. When the maid answered the ring she said:

"Bring half a bottle of champagne."

It came. My wife filled two glasses and offered me one. I watched her in amazement, thinking how true was the saying that, with women, one never knew! Yet, understanding her as I did, I should have known.

She raised her glass and smiled at me over the top of it.

"Well, old man, here's to your next twelve thousand! . . . And now I'll put on my nicest frock and we'll go out to dinner and forget the whole business."

I crawled back to work eventually feeling dispirited and—for me—pretty hopeless. Then, one morning, I got a message from Mr. (now Sir) Louis Sterling, then head of the Columbia Gramophone Company, asking me to go round and see him. We had a cup of tea together in his private office and suddenly he said:

"And how are things financially, Squire?"

"Rotten!" I said. "Harley Street has scooped the pool."

"I know!" he nodded. "A little way it has. . . . I say, excuse me for a moment, will you?" He went out with a businesslike air, returning in a few minutes.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said, "but there's a man waiting to see me on business, I find."

"That's all right," I answered, getting up. "I'll go now."

We shook hands and, as I reached the door, he produced a sealed envelope from his pocket.

"Better take this," he said, smiling. "It'll help pay those doctor's bills."

I was deeply touched. Words came with difficulty, but I managed to mumble something.

"Nonsense!" interrupted Stirling. "We want you back at work again—and not worrying yourself over trifles."

I got into the street, took the envelope from my pocket and was just going to open it when a voice called out: "Hello, Squire!"

It was a man I had not seen for years. I put the envelope back and promptly forgot it in the flow of reminiscence that came on us both.

During dinner that night my wife asked:

"How did you get on with Mr. Sterling?"

"Fine!" I answered. "It's always a tonic to talk to that man. . . . Good lord! That reminds me. I've got something he gave me, out in my overcoat pocket. I believe it's a cheque."

"Oh, Jack! How much?"

"I haven't looked yet. But I shouldn't be very surprised, my dear, if it's for a hundred. I'll go and get it."

I got it. That little scrap of paper said,

Pay J. H. Squire. . . . Five hundred pounds.

It was an act of kindness which I shall never forget.

A year later, on the occasion of his birthday, I was present at a sports reception when he gave £100,000 to his employees. On my own birthday he gave me a magnificent radio-gramophone inscribed, on a silver plate:

*To J. H. Squire on his fiftieth birthday from
his Columbia friends.*

Louis Sterling's generosity meant a lot to me, coming when it did, after that bad bout. It set me on my feet, gave me new courage and restored my confidence in myself. It was then, I think, that I definitely crystallised my creed.

I believe, above all, in three things: friendship, personal integrity and the turning of one's best face to the world. One must take things as they come, the bad with the good. The unimaginative, smugly-gratified successful man I have always detested, just as I have always detested the sour-faced unsuccessful one. If a man hasn't the "human touch" he isn't worth his salt; if he has no loyal friends there is something wrong somewhere; if he grows "too big for his boots" he is too small to be called a man.

Adversity may be a rough school, but it teaches some very sound lessons. First of all, it teaches one

who's who in the world of friendship. I have certainly learned that.

The depression had started, though most people did not wake up to the fact till about eighteen months later. Orchestral business was falling off badly all round, and I could see that I should have to start something out of my usual line if I wanted to make some money.

The seaside business looked to me like a sound proposition, so I fixed up a new show, with that in view. There were eleven artistes in addition to my personally directed Octet, and my lieutenant at that time was Phillippe Willoughby, to whom I entrusted the arrangement of the musical part.

The show, artistically, was a good one; but alas! the town which engaged us was not. It was a small, highly respectable place with a Town Council which bristled with elderly gentlemen who knew my business far, far better than I knew it myself. They got their fingers well down into the pie from the start. I was to do this and not do the other; they fussed breathlessly and without pause. I had to listen patiently to instructions from folk who, if my judgment is worth anything, would have made a mess of programme selling. Some of the complaints and suggestions would have been funny if they had not been so exasperating. And, as usual, the few intelligent members of that little coterie were talked down by the rest.

One alderman came up to me, puffing with grievance.

"Now, Mr. Squire," he said, "we want this entertainment to be a first class one, of course. There's

one thing I must say. You see, one . . . ahem! . . . judges the quality of work by certain things. . . . Yes. Yes. . . . As a matter of fact, I don't like the vocalist who broadcast with you the other day. I think you should do something about it. I remember remarking to my wife at the time, 'I don't like that vocalist,' and my wife said——"

"But, my dear sir," I interrupted, "that's nothing to do with me. I don't even know the lady, I assure you. The vocalist was engaged by the B.B.C. Not by me."

He looked pained and entirely unconvinced, and went off murmuring:

" . . . One judges . . . "

Another gentleman appeared.

"Mr. Squire," he said, "I have the very idea. The *very* thing! When I was in Germany, some years ago, I heard a choir of forty voices sing the 'Blue Danube.' It was most effective. Most. That is what we want here."

For a few moments I was staggered by the mental picture of forty people singing the "Blue Danube" at a small seaside resort, twice a day for three months on end. But I felt that the psychological aspect of the matter might not impress my adviser, so I tried another angle.

"Forty vocalists would all have to be paid," I pointed out.

That at least, quelled his ardour.

Another distinguished himself in yet another way. My name, of course, was being extensively advertised in the town: in coloured lights and all the rest of it, and I flattered myself that, by this time, it had

stamped itself on public consciousness. Therefore, it was a little puzzling to me accosted by this gentleman in an extremely vague manner.

"Do you appear on the platform at all?" he asked.

"Certainly!" I answered. "I conduct."

"Ah! You conduct, do you?" He observed me still more closely. "Are you the—er—producer or what?"

It was my turn to observe him.

"My dear sir," I said, "I—I am Squire. J. H. Squire."

"Squire?" he murmured. "Squire. I know the name." And here a look almost approaching intelligence broke over his countenance and he added:

"Have you any relatives in the fish business?"

The strain of that engagement told on me, right from the opening night. I collapsed after the show, so my wife put her foot down and insisted that she should take over the command for the rest of the season. I was not to appear except for my twenty-minute turn on the stage.

Among the audiences there were many people who really appreciated the show; and it was one which, I am sure, would have filled a West End theatre. Maybe we never "went over big" with that Town Council, but on my benefit night the patrons showed me what they thought. Gifts of all sorts and sizes poured in from rich and poor, ranging from an ordinary box of cigarettes to a solid silver tea service. Never in the history of the town, we were told, had such a scene been witnessed.

The public, in addition to its appreciation, must have guessed what I had been through, I fancy. No doubt it knew its alderman!

How can certain of our seaside towns hope to achieve wide popularity when the arrangements are in the hands of such men? They probably dream of vying with Eastbourne or Bournemouth, which makes it still more pitiable. Local trade and enterprise are hampered by inexpert management and silly "wowserism." All ideas other than those held by such councils are suspect, and advice, however good, is poison to them.

Such people are nothing but cranks. A man who tries to stop progress is as crazy a crank as the one who tries to anticipate it by some outrageous means or other. And there is certainly no fool like an old fool when it comes to crankiness.

A. P. Herbert makes one of his famous characters observe:

"And what my father used to say is good enough for me."

The perfect slogan for the No-Innovation crank! These people never learn anything; they never want to. For myself, I don't wonder that the young folk, every now and then, goaded by some exhibition of wowserism, leap up and talk as though they would like to see every man and woman of over forty-five annihilated. They are a bit cranky too, but for the young crank there is hope. He'll grow out of it. For the old one there isn't a glimmer.

Some years ago we had a very dear friend: a charming old woman of ninety-two. That woman was an education in herself. She never talked much, but she was a first-rate listener, and she always maintained that she liked nothing better than listening to young people.

"They show one *which way the world is going*," she said to me.

There's wisdom for you! Not a hint that, because the world wasn't going the way it went in her own youth, it must be going the wrong way.

She was always toddling off to exhibitions of new art and concerts of new music—"to find out what there was in it." She could not always appreciate what she saw and heard, but she kept an open mind, and was ready to admit that the fault might lie in herself. I should have liked to plant that precious old lady among the Cranky Council, but—alas!—the world, by that time, was the poorer by her death.

Jazz, in its early days, confused her a little, but she was soon nodding to its rhythm with the rest. She did not say, as so many did: "Oh it'll never take on over here." I had to grapple with a good bit of that, as a matter of fact, though I knew such critics were wrong.

I remember one other very astute remark of hers. "As long as one is always learning something one never really grows old." And she was proof of that. The brain which has closed itself to new ideas is a dying brain.

That is one reason why my wife and I are glad we have the children. We have never subscribed

to the Victorian doctrine that children have everything to learn from their parents and parents nothing to learn from their children. My own boyhood was tainted by that clumsy old belief. My mother did not hold it, but my father did. What he said was law, but not a law one might understand or ask any questions about; and—like so many old-fashioned parents—he never showed the slightest interest in the working of my mind. I simply wasn't expected to have any independent opinions. It was the fault of his generation, this suspicion and suppression of individual opinion. I hope its vogue will never return.

The sprightly old lady, I remember, was listening one day to a family conversation on the morals—or lack of them—that were prevalent during the War. One or two people had some strong observations to make, but when they had finished she said, very quietly:

"I think it is a mistake to judge people, during all that, by ordinary standards. One mustn't forget that it was a very violent and unusual time."

That remark made a great impression on me, for it showed her quality. A great many of us see it like that in retrospect, but she spoke soon after the War, when most people's vision was still cramped and distorted.

On her ninety-first birthday my wife wanted to give her a present, but a consultation with the family was not very helpful. A devotional book, it was felt, might strike the wrong note; (one really never knew with mother!) and something to wear might not fall in with personal taste.

"Why don't you ask her what she'd like?" suggested the eldest daughter. My wife went in to the old lady and put it to her.

"Well," she answered, twinkling up from her chair, "I expect it's what they call bad for me . . . but do you think I might have some chocolates?"

She got them—and we got a hearty laugh, my wife and I.

I have felt, all along, that this book would not be complete without some reference to our old friend, though, for private reasons, I am asked to withhold her name. As an example of kindness, clear-thinking, wisdom and general lack of crankiness I have never met her equal. She had a small, rather frail body, but it housed a marvellous courage. During her husband's life she followed her man half round the world: her children were born in circumstances that would make your squeamish ladies aghast. One first saw the light in a jungle. She was within an ace of death several times from wild animals and shipwreck—and emerged with that gentle personality intact and her appetite for ordinary interests as strong as ever. It was all experience—and therefore grist to her mill. She was not intellectually brilliant, but she always used her intelligence, and made the most of it. A grand old soul.

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN that season ended my wife and I were washed out.

"I don't know how you feel, Jack," she said, "but I simply must have a holiday. That place has put years on me."

The benefit night had brought in no less than £140, so we went to Scotland and, for one glorious fortnight, motored through that lovely country.

But that spell came to an end, and we returned to the ever-pressing problem of how to keep the pot boiling.

Conducting was telling on me. Every time I conducted a programme I had to spend the next day in bed. We called in our friend the doctor and had a talk about it. I felt that I could not go on like that.

"What you want," said the doctor, "is to get right out into the country and breathe God's fresh air. Nothing else will be much good to you."

"That's right enough," I answered, "but don't forget that we've four young children and even God's fresh air wants some supplementing with solid food. What are we supposed to do about money? Besides, there's another thing. After the hectic sort of life I've been leading how could I settle down in a cottage in the backwoods somewhere?"

It would be the death of me in a month, seeing nobody, doing nothing."

Our good friend, J. Cleveland Allen, who had been our manager and a welcome visitor at our old home, then made a proposition.

"I think you should take a small country hotel somewhere," he said. "Commercialise your entertaining powers. And Mrs. Squire can run the place as she runs her own home. It'll be interesting and it ought to pay."

We liked the sound of that and decided to look round for a suitable place.

We "looked round" at dozens and dozens of places. We travelled hundreds of miles and learned a lot we did not know before. When we saw something we thought we should like we brightened up; but not for long. In such a case we were asked the earth for what they called "the goodwill."

According to that system (in my own opinion and that of my patient wife) one must pay several thousand for an extremely nebulous asset. It works out rather like this:

You buy the Goodwill of a certain hotel business . . . and then you sit down and wait for the first customer. You see his form looming in the doorway and your heart bounds.

He enters, pauses and looks round with a touch of bleakness, scenting unfamiliarities.

"Hello!" he says. "Where's Mr. Jones?"

Mr. Jones, be it understood, is the gentleman from whom you have bought the business . . . and the Goodwill.

"Oh," you say, smiling engagingly, "Mr. Jones has gone. I'm the new proprietor. What can I do for you?"

His facial expression is something between that of a startled mustang and a man on whom somebody had just "done the dirty." Then his manner assumes a hollow geniality.

"Oh, are you?" he says, moving towards the door again. "My name's Smith. If you should see Jones remember me to him, will you? Sorry to have missed him like this." And out he goes.

That is probably the last you ever see of Mr. Smith and his significance in that expensive Goodwill.

We exhausted ourselves in this looking at places, grew weary of hearing about this Goodwill business. At the end of one long and tedious quest my wife sat down on the couch, pulled off her hat and said:

"You know, Jack, I believe we're going the wrong way in all this. You need to be a millionaire on this job, as far as I can see."

"Then what *shall* we do?"

"Start at the other end, of course. Find a little place that's down-and-out, neglected, very nearly bankrupt, and with no 'goodwill' at all. Then we'll buy it and start creating something out of the debris."

"Right!" I said. "We'll do that."

We soon discovered that there was no dearth of neglected and nearly bankrupt places. Not that all of them candidly admitted the impeachment, of

course, but their appearance left us in no doubt. We gazed upon innumerable leaky ceilings and leprous walls; we became thoroughly conversant with eccentric plumbing—and with establishments where plumbing of any sort was at a minimum. We bumped our heads against beams, wrenched our ankles on frolicsome floor-boards and tripped on undependable stairs. We smelt strange odours.

Sometimes the present occupier would meet us with a mendacious cheerfulness; sometimes with a look which said, plainly enough, that if he had been a fool to take the house in the first place we should be practically certifiable if we relieved him of it. We endured the blandishments of agents and developed an acrid wisdom; the word “desirable”—once so colourful and picturesque—ceased to have anything but a sinister meaning for us.

Then, at last, we found what we wanted, in Kent. It was five hundred feet above sea-level, with not another house in sight, and it was right on the main arterial road. It looked like a snip to us. There was an orgy of painting and decorating and we moved in.

“It’s peaceful,” I said to my wife. It certainly was, and I began to wonder, after a few days, if its peace would remain unbroken. Then I came in from a walk and my wife, running out to meet me, whispered:

“There’s a gentleman having tea in the lounge!”

“Really?”

She nodded excitedly. I adjusted my monocle and entered.

Yes, there was the gentleman, sure enough.

"Good afternoon, sir," I said, advancing. "I hope you have everything you require?"

"Oh, yes thanks!" he answered, jumping up. "You're Mr. Squire, aren't you? I've heard your Octet so often and I've got a lot of your records at home." He wrung my hand. "You don't know how delighted I am to see you!"

I wrung his hand in my turn.

"My dear sir! You're not half as delighted as I am to see you, I assure you."

He looked pardonably bewildered.

"Why . . . why . . . but you don't know *me*, surely?"

"Sir," I said, bowing, "I know you're my first customer!"

He finished his tea in a glow of domestic fame. Even the children contrived to take a surreptitious peep at him. I have no idea who he was, but when he left he expressed a wish that he might be the harbinger of good fortune.

Alas! This most agreeable gentleman did not prove to be the excellent omen that he—and we—hoped. We stayed in that house two and a half years and it was never a paying proposition. The season lasted for seven weeks only in the year and customers consisted entirely of people going to Margate by road. The other forty-five weeks were a sort of unpaid holiday for us. Nevertheless, we had improved the property so much that we were able to sell it at a profit. But still there was not enough money to meet those creditors of ours.

To my mind, there is no more back-breaking and heart-breaking thing than debt. I have seen

plenty of people carry it with the utmost sang-froid, certainly, but perhaps they have a mental twist which my wife and I do not possess, and never shall. Those debts were a real worry to us.

We looked round for another place and found it at Amersham. It was not expensive, but it had a supper licence, and we were able to make a good thing of the business. Ten months after we moved in our debts were all paid and we breathed properly again. Then a chance customer came in, looked round, liked what she saw and made us an offer for it, there and then. We sold it, coming out a thousand pounds to the good. But that was practically all the money we had now, and we knew that we should have to go mighty carefully. The doctor, who still had his eye on me, prescribed the seaside, for the worry over those debts had not been the best tonic in the world. We went to Hastings—and found the place a miracle worker. I had been driven there carefully in a shell of rugs and air-cushions, but inside two months I had sold the car and was walking four miles a day with regularity.

The two “baby girls” were young women now and eager to do something to help, so I took a gift shop for them.

What is it that makes a shop “go?” We never found out. Perhaps it is advertising; but there was no money to spare for that. There were gifts to suit everybody and everybody’s pocket, but people simply would not come in sufficient numbers to make it pay. I began to think uncomfortably of “hoodoos”; I pondered on those shops one sees here and there, whole streets of them, where shops

never seem to catch on. New tenants come along, deck out everything very hopefully, and then sit down and wait. And that is all that happens, as far as one can see, for one fine morning there is an empty window again with the same old legend about Desirable Business Premises stuck on the glass.

In due time we faded out in similar fashion, the richer in experience, perhaps, but in nothing else. It was a sad disappointment to the daughters.

I am a boastful sort of fellow when it comes to my children. Individually and in the mass I consider them something to be proud of. In these days of the one ewe-lamb my six make an impressive show, and on our Christmas cards, in the old days, the caption under the picture of the family group was "*The Celeste Octet Domestica.*"

The two eldest boys (of my former marriage) are grown men now and out in the world, of course, but my youngest is a lass of twelve. Temperamentally, my family is a "mixed bag," but I like it that way. It makes life one series of agreeable shocks. In fact, I am six times more surprised and interested than the present fashionable father of one.

Curiously enough, I have never detected any particular signs of musical ability or taste in any of them, yet they have been in an atmosphere of music all their lives. But *rhythm* is there. Keith, my second boy, took up dancing, and is now a professional dancer and dance host in a well-known London restaurant. In addition he is, like his elder brother Ian, an expert at bridge.

Barbara Ann, whose tastes are quiet and domestic,

helps her mother to run the home . . . and me. By this means I am suitably bullied, as all self-respecting male parents should be. Barbara Ann's coming was a great event for us. The money was rolling in fairly comfortably then, and we felt that nothing was too good for this young lady. I was sent off, I remember, to buy her a perambulator, and I let myself go. It was a very grand contrivance costing £40, with solid silver fittings and her monogram in gold. Fred Karno and his wife were the godparents. Marie Karno took my wife to a West End store for a cot and made us a present of it: the finest thing in stock and fit for a little princess.

Barbara accepted this sort of thing as a matter of course always, and she was a great stickler for family dignity. When we moved into a house at Barnes I evinced considerable pride in the tennis court, and she was entirely with me over that. I wanted it to be a first class court, and I nursed that lawn as if it had been a new-born infant. Nobody was allowed to set foot on it—not even the Pekinese. The lawn was a source of great trouble and expense and we spoke of it with bated breath. One day my wife was having a doze when Barbara dashed into the house with loud cries.

"What on earth's wrong?" demanded my wife, leaping up.

"Oh, Mummy!" gasped the young lady in a voice of scandalised excitement. "*There's a bird on Daddy's lawn!*"

All parents—as I am aware—glory in telling stories of the quaintness or perspicacity of their

offspring; but, after all, who can wonder at it? Their questions and remarks are a constant source of bewilderment to the adult mind. I know they were to mine.

Dorothy June, our second daughter, is the studious one, and her questions were real posers. One day, when she was eight, she put a beauty to me.

"Daddy," she demanded, "what's that about the soul leaving the body? How does it do that?"

Even an expert theologian, I imagine, would find that a teaser, and I do not profess to be an expert. I floundered about for a bit, got more and more fogged in my well-meant explanations and then, in desperation, lit a cigarette. It was merely the old parental device for gaining time, but it served the purpose.

"I know!" said June brightly. "It's like the flame leaving a dying match!"

Well, I have never heard a better explanation.

June, for all her fundamental seriousness—perhaps because of it—is a born comedienne. I think the stage should get her, and if I have my way it will. At present she is doing kindergarten work, but if things point in the right direction later on I shall have her properly trained. That is another of my pleasant dreams for the future.

Then there is Thomas James Douglas, who explains away this baptismal exuberance by the fact that he had three godfathers: Tommy Vaughan, Jimmy Levy and Douglas Lowe. Jim was always the easiest to handle, right from the start: the placid kind, not given to talk unless he feels that the circumstances call for it. Jim is now a fine chess

player, a really good scholar and—oh, sublime gift in this age of fussing!—no worrier. When he was quite a child, all through my long illness, he was my constant companion. He would sit beside me, perfectly content, but never speaking unless spoken to.

One Sunday afternoon, feeling conversationally inclined, I leaned over and had a look at his book, which was illustrated by pictures of biblical subjects.

"Ask me any questions," I said—perhaps rashly. Jim considered this.

"There *is* one thing I'd like to know, Daddy," he replied.

"Well, what is it?"

"Daddy, Mummy told me that if I'm good all my life, when I die the angels will come down and take me up to heaven in a chariot with four horses."

(Dear, dear!—I thought—what has she let me in for this time?)

"That's right, isn't it, Daddy?"

"Well," I temporised, "I don't know exactly how many horses, of course, but if you behave yourself I expect something of the sort will happen."

He grew confidential.

"Daddy," he whispered, "do you think, if I'm *extra* good, the angels would let me drive the horses?"

Elizabeth Joan, of the soft brown eyes, looks on life with the bright courage of modernity. I do not think Fate will get many squeals out of our Betty. She is a young person of independence, curiosity and extraordinary intelligence. The world is her oyster

—and what else should the world be when one is twelve?

Betty fears nobody. People, however important or strange, are just people to her. She talks to her fellow creatures with complete sang-froid. Do I see a journalist in the making there? This matter of deciding what one's progeny can and will do is very puzzling at times. Their tastes, hobbies and fancies are bewildering. Jim, for instance, gets away in a corner somewhere and, to amuse himself, draws with considerable skill; but where he found that aptitude I have not the remotest notion. Their odd preferences, too, defeat one. Children who—as ours did then—ride in comfortable cars express a frantic desire to take rides in a tram, for instance. I suppose it is just the wholesome and universal hunger for experience. Betty, for instance, had been promised a jaunt in a tram as a special treat, and went off with her mother in fine fettle.

Nothing escaped her. When she got back I think she knew every passenger down to the shoelaces; but the journey was somewhat abruptly terminated.

Two women seated next to her were discussing the merits of conductors: the musical—not the tram—variety. Betty listened intently, but eventually she decided that the season was ripe for a pronouncement of judgment.

“Excuse me!” she said, addressing them in a penetrating childish treble. “I’m Betty Squire. My Daddy is J. H. Squire, of the Celeste Octet, you know, and he’s *quite* the greatest conductor in the world!”

My wife gathered her up and made a hasty exit at the next stopping place.

A few years ago Phil Willoughby told me that his eldest daughter had started as a teacher of dancing, so we arranged for her to come over to our place once a week and give the four kids lessons. After some months she asked us to let them take part in a performance of "The Windmill Man," which she was staging with her pupils at the Wimbledon Theatre. In one scene the dance, a sailors' hornpipe, was performed by a crowd of youngsters in the orthodox white ducks and so on, Betty being the smallest and last in the line.

The whole thing was going along splendidly when, to our consternation, Betty's trousers were seen to be slipping down. She ignored the difficulty until they got below her knees, by which time she was right in the middle of the stage. Without turning a hair she hoisted them up, but down they came again. This happened at least half-a-dozen times, with the young woman making the temporary adjustments and then dashing on after the troupe. The audience, needless to say, was convulsed by this time, but Betty was perfectly solemn and completely unmoved. Phil, who was conducting the orchestra, whispered to me in the interval: "That bit of Betty's must stop in the show. It's great!" And stop in the show it did, with pronounced success. But the delicious part of the whole thing was her observation when she came off.

"Mummy," she said, "did you notice that my trousers slipped down?"

Ye gods! Did the whole world notice it!

Of a truth, a man with his quiver full has very few dull moments.

I recall an occasion when young Jim's behaviour, for one awful space of time, threatened almost international complications—or so my wife and I thought.

We had taken the children to a seaside resort on the French coast, when he was a toddler. The hotel in which we stayed had not a bath in the whole show. However, we did what we could to make up the deficiency by numerous dips in the sea and, for the purpose, we hired a permanent bathing tent.

The folk who had the tent next to ours were English and very delightful people. They took a great fancy to young Jim, and showed it by keeping a large box of chocolates on tap for him. He was allowed to go into the tent and help himself whenever he wished: a privilege of which he availed himself quite frequently, needless to say.

We were sorry when these people left. Fortunately, Jim was never a howler; otherwise we might have anticipated bad trouble. But the next morning, on the sands, we missed him. After a frantic hunt round my wife ventured to peep inside the neighbouring tent. It contained the effects of strangers, though they were absent at the moment. She came out, shaken with apprehension and dragging young Jim by the hand.

"Jack!" she gasped. "An awful thing's happened!"

"What?" I asked, scared in my turn.

"Those new people. They've got a box of chocolates too—and Jim's almost guzzled the lot!"

We sat down to face this thing and wait for our neighbours. We pictured ourselves trying to explain to an indignant and fluent French family, and we didn't feel equal to it. There was nothing in our phrase-book even remotely calculated to meet the case.

Then we saw them coming back.

"Thank the Lord!" I said. "They're English. At least we can say something apologetic and intelligible!"

We began at once. The mother heard us out, looked at Jim.

"Why, of course!" she said. "He can *always* eat our chocolates. Let him come in whenever he likes. He's a darling!"

I never had better reason for blessing that lad's smile.

The small son of a man I know made an amusing remark some years ago. I believe it was given to an artist and illustrated in one of our popular periodicals. It is certainly up to standard. This kid had been thoroughly naughty all day, and eventually his exhausted mother carted him off to bed.

"Now, say your prayers," she instructed, but not expecting anything out of the way. Her gravity was taxed to the utmost when the child knelt down and said:

"Please God, make me a good boy," adding, with some severity: "*And don't forget it this time!*"

That stark logic, that characteristic getting down to facts is a fine training for us grown-ups, after all. We don't always enjoy it, but it surely shows up our little evasions and meannesses, our furtive

attempts to make things easier for ourselves. Bless the children!

I once met a fellow who, though knowing no more about astronomy than a bison, turned himself into quite a fair scholar on the subject in order to be able to answer his little daughter's persistent questions.

"I did it to keep her quiet at first," he said, "but now, damn it all, I'm always doing it to amuse myself!"

Incidentally, it gave him a hobby for the rest of his life.

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The failure of the shop meant more changes. I thought it all over and I saw that there was nothing for it, now that I was feeling stronger, but a return to my old job. I had fallen out of the swim of things during that long and enforced rest and it was a bit of a puzzle to know what to do. However, I thought of my café engagements in the old days and it gave me an idea.

Could I find something of the sort locally? I wanted the sea air and I wanted to avoid tedious journeys just then, so I approached Mr. Spence, the manager of the big Plummer Roddis store in the town, and made my proposition to him. He was interested, and the upshot of our talk was that he engaged me to supply a trio, with myself as 'cello, to play daily in the store's restaurant. So I began work again, with the comforting feeling that I was once more pulling my weight. Things were going along very smoothly and I imagined that my worries had petered out.

And then I became involved in a lawsuit. I had no doubt that the outcome would be a favourable one for me and, from motives of economy, I had no counsel. That is where I made a mistake. I lost and when I heard the verdict I knew that I was smashed. The damages were only £75, but the costs were appalling. I came out of that court with the realisation that I simply could not meet them.

I went home feeling dazed.

"It's bad news, isn't it, Jack?" said my wife, after one look at me. My heart seemed to drop into my boots.

"I seem to be forever bringing you bad news, my dear," I answered. "Well, I'm done. Really done this time."

She asked me what the verdict was and I told her.

"We'll manage somehow," she said. "We've been down before and up again. I've had my share of the good times and now I'm taking my share of the bad, that's all. That's how it ought to be. Have your dinner now and try not to worry. We'll talk after."

It came to me then, with a rush of emotion, that a man with such a helpmeet as this could never despair for long. Whatever might happen to me I was, in the most important thing in the world, the luckiest of men.

"God bless you!" I said, and I never meant anything half as much.

After dinner we sat and talked, and another of my difficulties cropped up. Some time before the action I had received a letter from a young fellow who was then fulfilling an engagement with the

municipal orchestra. The letter did not say much beyond offering me his services, and it did not arouse any particular interest in my mind at the time. However, I decided that I might as well hear him play, as he suggested.

I went along, expecting nothing very unusual in the way of a violinist, but this young fellow surprised me. I have always had a flair for "picking them," and I knew, before he had played a dozen bars, that here was a real artist. In Tom Jenkins I saw a potential winner—and I told him so. Something had to be done about him. Here was the touch of genius which had always excited me when I spotted it. I had never been wrong; I knew I wasn't wrong now.

I went up to London and interviewed a big firm of caterers on his behalf. They heard him play and promptly offered him a job at nearly double the salary he was getting. But it meant working for six hours a day, the time extending over fourteen hours, counting travelling. I saw the hitch there.

"You don't want to be just another hack musician," I told him. "You've got to go over big, my boy, one of these days, and that means hours of regular practice. This job won't leave you any time. What's to be done?"

Here was a quandary. Neither Tom nor I could see a way out of it; but my wife was there and she did.

"Why don't you gamble on him yourself, Jack?" she suggested.

"I can't," I said. "I've no money."

She laughed.

"Don't let that stop you. What does that matter to *you*? You'll get the money all right. I know you."

I hesitated for a moment only.

"All right, I'll do it!"

In this way I started again as an impresario. I made an agreement with Jenkins for six years, with option of continuance. Under this arrangement I was to gamble on him. I also guaranteed him a yearly salary far in excess of what he was getting and the contract was to start in six months' time.

But now, in view of that verdict, it looked like an added responsibility. I was to discover that my "hunch" was a good one, but I am afraid nothing appeared very bright to me that night.

Soon after this I had to give up my restaurant job in order to fulfil my annual nine weeks' engagement at Southsea. This was a paying thing, of course, and brought in as much as a year's salary elsewhere, but still there was not enough to keep us all and meet those costs. My liabilities went on mounting up and I could not see any way out of the mess. I went to my solicitor and asked him what I should do.

"File your petition," he said.

I knew that he was right. It was the only answer. I took his advice.

The day before I had sold the stock of that ill-fated shop. It had cost me £355, and I got £55 for it. I handed the money straight over to the Official Receiver.

Now I had to get used to the sensation of being a

bankrupt. It was a particularly unpleasant one, by the way. But I see now that it had its points. As a test of human and social relationships I know nothing to touch it. I quickly observed that certain acquaintances, who had been almost robustly jovial before, now regarded me frostily or found something to occupy their attention elsewhere when I passed them on the street.

I am still a little bewildered by that phenomenon. In what way did I differ from the man I had been a week before? By what obscure standard had I been judged if I could tumble, in the course of a few hours, straight out of the list of acknowledged citizens? I was no less personable or faddy about my appearance; I had committed no crime; I certainly had not sidled up to anybody and tried to borrow a fiver. The metamorphosis of these people astonished me—and it still does.

Only once did I attempt to borrow, and that was from a wealthy man who had been a near neighbour and a frequent visitor to my house in the old days. In this bad time I screwed up my courage and wrote to him, asking him if he would let me have fifty pounds to tide me over. Fifty pounds (I told myself) would be no more to him than half-a-crown would be to the average man. He would never miss it.

I was right in one respect. He took very good care that he did not. He wrote back and informed me that his private principles would not permit him to lend money. That closed the subject and, incidentally, our friendship.

I concede him his right to refuse, but it rankled. Had I not been sure that he would help me I should

never have written. I had actually been counting on those principles of his.

Well, I learned something. I had noticed, often enough, that principles will sometimes lead a man to do surprising things; now I knew that the things they occasionally prevent him from doing are still more inexplicable to his fellows.

CHAPTER XVII

I SOMETIMES think that there is something a little demoralising about prosperity. Naturally, I did not think so at that particular period but the idea has come to me several times since.

I do not think it possible for a man to get into the "big money" without experiencing some sort of change in himself. He is at once more independent and more dependent. He is outside small worries, but he is paying a lot of people to do things for him—things which, in other circumstances, he would be doing for himself—and when the money-prop is knocked away there is a kind of giving at the knees. The whole world, for the time being, seems to be a question of LSD—and that is one thing the whole world certainly is *not*.

I suppose that one's emotions, all through life, tend to repeat themselves. When I first realised my position fully the years dropped back for me and I felt very much as I did when I was stranded on my first trip to New York: much the same, only worse. The world which I had been accustomed to think of as a rather comfortable place had suddenly grown rather terrifying and hostile. Experience ought to have convinced me that if one can get out of one mess one can get out of another, but it isn't always easy to remember that. I had many of the sensations

of that boy who stood on the dockside without a cent, but I lacked his optimism.

That man's refusal to help me affected me badly. I had liked him quite genuinely, and if he had been forced to ask anything of me I know that it would never have entered my head to refuse. What he did undermined—for the moment—my faith in human nature and, what was more, my faith in a kindly Providence. I am not a man of orthodox religion; I do not go to church, but I have a faith of my own which—barring those few bad hours—has buoyed me up. But here was a man, professedly religious, a man who knew me for an honest friend, holding back when he might have done a fellow creature a really good turn. I dare say he thanks his Maker, regularly every Sunday, that he is not as other men are; and in that, possibly, he subconsciously includes bankrupts. Anyway, that is the impression I have retained of him.

I once reckoned up, as far as my memory served me, how many people owed me money in amounts of less than five pounds. The result came to well over £500. I shall never see a penny of that money again, but what do I care? In my palmy days five hundred was neither here nor there, and if those odd loans helped and cheered the poor devils who needed them that is good enough for me. If they think of me kindly that is all I ask.

I have had many a brush with the "unco guid" in my time—when I felt a suspicion about that quality. I do not mean to say that I consider all such people humbugs; but I do think that plenty of them are sheer cranks. Perhaps the breed has

changed of late years, but in my early days in Portsmouth I lived with a picked bunch. I feel myself, after that, to be something of an authority. These people were red-hot Radicals, and it was all tangled up in a most complicated way with their religion. Anybody who was outside the Radical fence was completely outside moral bounds, and heading straight for damnation. One little incident made a great impression on me, and has given me many a laugh since.

The old man of the family was the worst fanatic of the lot, and never let slip a chance to have a dig at his moral-and-political enemies. One day, I remember, a niece came over for the day, bringing with her a young man. I fancy that there were romantic possibilities, and the girl had tipped off the family to be on their best behaviour. She was a bright lass, and the young man seemed a very decent fellow, intelligent and go-ahead. During midday dinner the conversation—as usual—veered round to politics, and the old man hotly delivered himself of the dictum: “All Conservatives are scamps!”

“You think so?” answered the young fellow quietly, and contrived to change the angle of the talk. The girl, I could see, was raging. Afterwards she got the old chap in the kitchen and gave him a thorough dressing-down. She, at least, was not afraid of him.

“You ought to apologise, Uncle,” she said. “Trying to offend people like that. Besides, you should think of me. I—I like him and I bring him here—and then you go on about all that, as good as



Photo, Sasha

SIR LOUIS STERLING

The man who made the world gramophone-minded

calling him a blackguard. You know he can't answer you back under your own roof and eating your food."

The consequence was that uncle promised to apologise, which he did in characteristic fashion. After a lot of hemming and hawing he got it out.

"I'm sorry, Mr. So-and-so," he said, "if I offended you when I said Conservatives were a lot of scamps. I didn't intend it that way, of course . . ."

His face twisted with emotion and he added:

" . . . *But they are!*"

An honoured visitor to the house was the local minister. Every Sunday he came along to tea, and added to the existing difficulties of my life. He was a pale-faced man with astonishingly bushy black whiskers and I used to look at him across the table and honestly endeavour to discover what there was about him that captivated the females of his congregation. Candour forces me to admit that I never did. He certainly was no Clark Gable, yet women fell over each other to get at him. It was war to the knife between us, for—as he knew—I had been brought up in the Navy and was Conservative to the backbone. He never missed a chance of showing me that I was a mistake from the word Go. When he made tangential references to Sinners, Backsliders, Evil-Thinkers and Upholders of Dastardly Politics he meant, in short, J. H. Squire, and I knew it.

One day the late Lord Russell of Killowen visited the town and addressed a big Radical meeting in the Town Hall. Family excitement was intense and I was persuaded to escort the mother and daughter to

this function. On the following Sunday the minister turned up as usual, and we had the meeting all over again for tea.

"Yes," ruminated the minister, "Lord Russell is a fine orator, as you say, Mr. Squire. But"—he lowered his voice—"don't you think he is a very ugly man?"

"Come, come, Mr. Jones!" I chided (though Jones was not his name, but I will spare him), "I certainly think that a very improper remark from you, a minister of religion."

There was a gasp all round the table.

"Just—just an ordinary comment, Mr. Squire," said the holy man. I shook my head.

"Decidedly blasphemous!" I replied.

"What do you mean?" he asked in horror. I can see those faces round the table now: frozen in the act of mastication, observing this turning of the worm.

"Well," I said, "some time in the future, I have no doubt, you'll stand up in your pulpit after this and tell us that we are all made in God's own image!"

The following Saturday I received my ultimatum. My room was preferable to my company. But I am sure that I formed a very fruitful and improving topic of conversation for years, in consequence.

I do not think people of this type are as common as they were, and I look on it as a sign of grace in this old world.

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During the débâcle I hugged to myself one consolation. We had enjoyed the money and made

the most of it while it was coming in. We lived well; we had good food, good clothes, good holidays. We had a store of memories that nothing could take away.

Some of them, to be sure, had their ironic side. Eating my somewhat economical lunch on the day after filing my petition, I thought of one episode which had occurred some time before in a fashionable restaurant where the wife and I often lunched.

The waiter knew us well. He was a nice chap and I had been in the habit of tipping him rather handsomely for services rendered. On this particular day I had just put through a good contract and was feeling pretty pleased with myself.

At a table near I saw a man I had some reason to dislike: a pompous fellow whose mannerisms and patronising ways had always irritated me. I watched him pay his bill and, from the waiter's expression I gathered that the tip had been generous. While the fellow was lighting up a big cigar I signalled for our own bill. The waiter brought it across and I gave him a pound for himself. I felt that the matter had become competitive by now.

George (the waiter) was delighted, of course.

"Now, tell me, George," I said. "Have you ever had a tip as large as that for lunch for two people?"

"No, sir, never."

"What's the biggest you ever had then?" I asked.

George and I were old friends. Obviously, he did not mind telling me.

"Fifteen shillings, sir."

I tilted an eye at the fellow at the other table. Just like him, I thought, to give George fifteen shillings by way of a gesture.

"And when was that?"

George smiled.

"Oh, some time ago, sir."

My wife leaned forward, very interested by now. But, womanlike, she wanted things cleared up to her complete satisfaction.

"Who gave it you, George?" she asked.

George reddened.

"Well, madam——"

"You needn't mind telling me," said my wife.

"Well, madam," replied George, "as a matter of fact it was Mr. Squire!"

We laughed at that, caught in our own trap. Maybe money is inseparable from ostentation in some form or other. It is a great temptation, with it in one's pocket, to use it sometimes for small personal aggrandizements. That, I suspect, is one of its less admirable attributes. Perhaps that is why seasoned millionaires never carry any in their pockets. They know too much about money and what it can do. I knew one man who had about three million pounds to his name, and if he wanted as much as a packet of cigarettes when he was out he had to borrow a bob from his chauffeur!

The same man once made a very interesting remark to a friend of mine.

"You know," he said, "I sometimes think I'm one of the loneliest men in the world. The worst of having money is that it colours everything—particularly friendships. You get suspicious of

people. I'm invited to a luncheon, let's say. Well, that's all right. I go and they do me well. But all the time I know that somebody in the party is thinking of getting a few thousands out of me for something or other."

An artist friend of ours, a woman who had often been a guest at his house, once presented him with a sketch she had done.

"That's very kind of you," he said, and, knowing that painting was her job, he added: "But you must let me pay you for it, of course."

"I certainly shan't!" she answered, looking round the room which was full of things which must have cost a king's ransom. "For goodness' sake let somebody *give* you something for once. You must be sick to death of always paying!"

The old man was as pleased with that buckshee bit of water-colour as if it had been the Koh-I-Noor; much more so, in fact. When we heard that story we felt that big money might have its drawbacks, even if we had never suspected it before. But there is another side to it as well, and one thing I shall never forget.

When we were first married, after that romantic business at Matlock, I noticed one day that my wife was wearing one of those strings of imitation pearls which can be bought for anything from five shillings to a guinea. I took it off her neck and had a look at it.

"Has it any sentimental value for you?" I asked.

"No, Jack. But it makes a sort of finish, don't you think?"

"Give it away—or throw it away," I said. "When

you wear pearls, my dear, they are going to be the real thing."

Fifteen months later the nurse came to me and said: "Come and have a look at your baby girl, Mr. Squire." I crept up the stairs and saw them both—with an emotion which is beyond any words of mine—and kneeling by the bed I kissed her. Then I took from my pocket a string of real pearls and clasped them round her pretty neck. I had sweated blood to get them, but I had succeeded, and she has worn them ever since. I think we both regarded the money and effort they had cost as some measure of the love and affection I felt for her.

I do not think we ever allowed ourselves to become slaves of the cheque-book. She always resisted the temptation to sit back on money and do nothing, and the fact that she had run our home so practically and well stood us in good stead when bad times came. I found that she could cook a dinner with anybody and, what is more, there were no "black looks" or complaints as an accompaniment. A friend of hers, a wealthy woman, had once come to her for advice in a crisis, and the remembrance of that—coupled with her natural sense of humour—did a lot, I am sure, towards maintaining her personal perspective. This woman was going through a wretched experience (with a man mixed up in it somewhere, needless to say), and my wife called on her almost every day, making valiant efforts to cheer her up. The result was negligible, and the lady continued to talk fluently of suicide—though it may console the sensitive to know that she is still very much alive after a lapse of years.

"But you can't go on like this," said my wife. "You'll start boring everybody soon, my dear, and then where will you be?"

The intention of ending this miserable existence was most emphatically repeated. My wife glanced round the expensive flat and had an idea.

"Well, before you do that," she suggested, "why not *try* something else? What you need is a complete change, of course. Even the table and chairs here are always reminding you. Look here, buy yourself a caravan. Take somebody with you and go off into the country. Do your own chores; buy and cook your own food and wash your own clothes. Peel potatoes and all the rest of it, and spend all day in the fresh air. Move about from place to place. You're simply driving yourself silly with sitting here and moping and seeing the same people day after day. Will you try it?"

"Oh, I can't!" wailed the afflicted lady. "I simply can't! My dear, *I should die without a bathroom!*"

I have come to the conclusion that there is a lot to be said for beginning life in a small way. I had known what it was to be poor, and the experience, when it was repeated, did not shock me as it might have done had the proverbial "silver spoon" been my portion. I have never been able to understand the old-fashioned prejudice against the self-made man—as long as he makes himself on some reasonable pattern. But I suppose that, in his case, people are on the lookout for peculiarities, and when they see them their impulse is to say: "Ha! What did I

tell you?" Silver Spoon could do things fifty times more outrageous and be thought nothing more than mildly eccentric.

Perhaps that is why I was so tickled by an incident after a recent broadcast. I had given a short talk on my life, and a friend of mine asked some man—a stranger to me—what he thought of it.

"It was wonderful," said the other. "But I thought you told me that Squire was a man who'd come from nothing? Why, he talked like a gentleman!"

The more I see of life the more I am inclined to the notion that human experience is not complete without a taste of being "up against it." To have money and comfort all one's days is to be psychologically lop-sided. It takes a dickens of a lot of imagination for a wealthy man to put himself into the place of a poor one and, since money is power, things being as they are, this seems a pity. I know that my own life is enriched by knowing something of both sides of the question, and I often wonder why rich people, if they have a grain of real curiosity in them, do not make the poverty experiment. It would be a simple matter to tie one's money up in some fashion for a year, let us say, and live on a small amount for the sake of the experience. The wealthy, did they but realise it, can have it both ways. That is where they are lucky. If they want to know what it is like to be on short commons they can find out, and no harm done; but if some impoverished creature makes experiments in what it feels like to be rich he soon finds himself in Queer Street!

Anyway, I offer the suggestion for what it is worth to our young "bloods" and Bright Young Things who are out for a new sensation. In their subsequent discoveries they could be sure of one thing: they would find out quite a lot about themselves. Naturally, I see the point of our bathroom friend's objection. She could not bear the thought of things being any worse, but since one can never feel sure, in this precarious world, that they *won't* be, it is just as well to find out how one could stand up to it.

One great advantage of my own life is the opportunity I have had of meeting all sorts of folk on terms of equality. I think that is why I have always had a sneaking ambition to write—to introduce human beings to one another, as it were. I envy gifted writers that faculty. I have met striking personalities in all worlds; people who, for one reason or another, have left their mark on me. Some have been celebrities and some, socially speaking, complete nonentities, and it has often been hard to say which has had the greater influence on me. Sometimes a friend has said the word which has encouraged or helped me: sometimes it has come from an entire stranger. One encounters another man in the general jostle and, often enough, it is not till he has gone out of reach for good that one realises how much that word or that helping hand really meant. Occasionally one is lucky enough to be able to make some return. Just recently I was able to stand up at a public dinner, for instance, and offer my thanks to that splendid friend, Mr. Lidiard, and nothing has ever pleased me more.

But there are others I shall never be able to thank, because life—or death—has swallowed them up. It is not a happy thing to realise.

I remember having luncheon at the house of a very comfortably placed man of my acquaintance during the Depression, and coming away absolutely disheartened by the talk of disaster which had been served with the meal. Everything was going to the dogs; the family would be ruined and reduced to living on a few paltry hundreds a year. The future was as black as Erebus; I was damned lucky to have a job not connected with the City . . . and so on and so forth. I walked out of that gate stewing in misery, filled with black despair—and, incidentally, with an excellent luncheon.

The house was on a main road which ran between two large workhouses, and thus it happened that, within five minutes, I met a complete contrast. A tramp stopped me and asked me for a match to light a fag-end of cigarette. We dropped into talk and he told me that he had come from the North in search of a job. He had three rashers of bacon in a tin, and these he showed to me with great pride. He told me, too, that he had a "young lady" back there in his home town.

"I'm all right," he said, nodding. "I'm all right." And with his three rashers, his courage and his belief in his girl he was setting out, ready to face the dreary task of finding work. He was one of the most cheerful chaps I have ever met and, talking to him, I could have kicked myself for my feelings of five minutes ago. What is more, I wanted to turn back

and do a bit of salutary kicking in the house I had just left.

I have often thought of that man and wondered how he fared; but whatever happened to him I am pretty certain that he knew "how to take it." Many a dark moment, for me, has been brightened by the mental picture of that scrubby, jolly face beaming at me over the tin of rashers.

Another time I saw a man seated in a hedge reading a dirty scrap of newspaper. He was bearded and ragged—a regular hobo—and as I had just finished my daily paper I took it across and offered it to him. He looked up, smiled and said, in the voice of an educated man:

"Thanks very much. That's most kind."

If that fellow was a crook I am no judge of men. I found myself puzzling over him. What had put him where he was? He seemed contented enough. I did not ask him any questions, for my instinct was against doing so. Was it persistent bad luck or what? Of course, my solicitude may have been quite misplaced. For all I know he may have been a journalist out for copy, but I hadn't that feeling about him. Perhaps he was a natural vagabond, a hater of responsibilities; or perhaps what I saw was just another—and less sinister—manifestation of that Spirit of Adventure which invests those Men on the Moor. It's a nice problem.

I suppose there are times when every man resents responsibility. Illness and financial bad luck may make any of us succumb to that for a while; but I do not see how one can dissociate responsibility from a normal life. If a man wants a wife and home

and children he ties himself down—that is, if he wants to make a good job of it. Without “The Family” there would be no civilisation at all. Even if we eventually come to communal nurseries and kitchens and what not, they will still be *somebody’s* responsibility. As a happily married man it may be that I am not an unbiased judge, but it is my opinion that responsibility and discipline are necessary things, even if they do go against the grain sometimes. The free-lance may have a rollicking time for a few years, but his old age cannot be much of a prospect. And if we go on living at all there is no escaping that!

When this financial calamity fell on me I was very conscious of my responsibilities; but I was grateful for them too. My money had gone, but I was surrounded by people who loved me and were loyal to me. I had made a niche for myself. One cannot have it both ways. Had I stuck to those wandering habits of mine I should have fared miserably in my illness, for one thing, and I knew it. Strangers, as I have proved, can be kindness itself, but they are not much of an incentive to one to overcome difficulties and disabilities. That is why I never display the particular sort of worldly wisdom which tries to dissuade young fellows from marrying while their prospects are still in the making. By doing so one might be cheating them out of their best and grandest Adventure.

I only know that on that eventful evening, in the dusk of our sitting-room with my wife beside me, I glimpsed something which was mine in the place of material things I had lost: something

which, but for these reverses, I should never have appreciated or felt. We did not talk much. There was nothing more to be said, but I fancy that we were closer to each other then than we had ever been; and real *nearness* to another human creature is the rarest thing in the world.

Women—and wives in particular—are incalculable beings, I have been told. Men ought to thank God for that! I remember a story my mother used to tell, when she thought I was old enough to appreciate it. A young fellow she once knew married a girl who had a really morbid hatred of drink, and she always declared that the one thing which would make her pack up and leave a man would be drunkenness. Anything else in the world she might be induced to overlook, but never that. It seems that, at an impressionable age, she had seen a tipsy man strike his wife, and it had given her a perfect detestation of the business.

People used to rag her about it in a casual sort of way, but nothing could shake her. The husband began to be a bit irritated by this attitude of hers and, being a practical joker (and a rash young fool into the bargain!) he decided to play a trick on her by rolling home one evening in the best style. His idea was to keep it up till the tirade was over and the bride flouncing out of the house, and then he would disclose the fact that it was all in the way of good, clean fun.

He accomplished the rolling very artistically, with some singing to help it out, and was met at the front door by a startled young wife. But instead of the tirade and the flouncing he found, to his secret

horror, a very different state of affairs. She pulled him inside and half dragged, half carried him up to bed and took off his clothes. He told my mother, years afterwards, that she bathed his head and cried and prayed over him half the night, and he felt too utterly ashamed to tell her the truth. She made him a first-rate wife and never mentioned the episode again. That girl, to her dying day, never knew that her man had done nothing worse than pour a spoonful of whisky over his hair in order to create the right "atmosphere."

I once read, in some book, a remark which impressed me very much, on the subject of husbands and wives. In it the young wife says that marriage is a good institution "because there is always somebody to stick up for you—even when you're in the wrong."

Perhaps that is one of its most precious attributes!

Anyhow, I learned that night, more thoroughly than ever, that however big or small the burden, it is better to have two pairs of shoulders under it.

CHAPTER XVIII

ONE could, I imagine, go on writing about Women and Wives *ad infinitum*. A lot has been said about them up to date, and I dare say a lot more will be said, though perhaps not by me.

The thing which astonishes me most in women is their courage and power of endurance. When one has been brought up in the belief—as most of us were in the old days—that women are “soft” the revelation of what some of them can put up with in the way of pain, discomfort and hardship is astounding.

I always had an example of courage in my own mother, of course, but a boy, maybe, is not quick to notice and appreciate a thing like that. He takes it for granted in one so near to him; but I see it now, right enough.

Not long ago, when young Betty and I were alone in the flat one evening, she spilt boiling water on her hand and took off some of the skin. It must have been horribly painful for the child, and when my wife came home and attended to it—with Betty “biting on the bullet”—she said:

“But why didn’t you run in and tell Daddy? He’d have put something on it for you.”

“Oh, no!” answered the youngster. “I wouldn’t do that. He was busy writing and I didn’t want to disturb him.”

I imagine she gets that doggedness from her mother, who has always been one to minimise her discomforts. I remember well a certain morning, years ago, when I suspected that something was wrong. I had a *matinée* engagement, but I wasn't at all happy about her, and I hung around that morning. A woman may contrive to keep complaints off her tongue, but she can't keep that look of pain out of her eyes.

"I'm perfectly all right, Jack!" she assured me vigorously. "You're fancying things. Now go, there's a dear, or you'll be late."

I stepped into the car; she waved to me from the window and I went off.

It was my custom, on returning home, to sound the motorhorn so that one of the maids should run out and open the gate for me. On that particular afternoon I gave the usual signal, but nothing happened. I imagined some slight hitch in the dinner arrangements, perhaps, so I settled back in the car, and, opening my paper, began to read the racing results. Somebody would be out before long.

Suddenly the door opened and I saw the cook pelting down the drive towards me.

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed.

"What is it?" I asked.

"A beautiful little girl!" said cook.

My daughter June. I was out of that car and up the stairs like a flash. My wife, with the little drops of sweat still on her forehead, smiled up at me.

"Tell me, Jack," she whispered. "*Who won the Steward's Cup?*"

Staggering people, these women.

Betty's birth was a premature one. My wife had a fall while we were on holiday at Broadstairs and, after a fortnight in bed, the doctor advised me to take her home. We made her comfortable in the car and were just going to start off when she called out: "*Wait!*"

Thoroughly alarmed, I asked her what was wrong.

"Nothing wrong," she answered. "But I wish you'd send a wire to my bookmaker. 'Black Gown,' 'Black Sheep,' ten shillings each way both, and a ten shilling double."

I sent the wire and when we reached Lewisham I stopped the car and bought a paper.

Both horses had won at the same odds of 8 to 1 against.

Betty was born the next morning, and my wife had won fifty pounds into the bargain. That surely was her lucky day.

This highly domesticated talk reminds me of an extraordinary story which, though perfectly true, has sometimes brought me under the suspicion of romancing. I withhold the name of the principal actor for very obvious reasons. His name is less like Harold than anything else I can think of at the moment, so I will call him that.

A party of us, including Harold, John Hassall (the famous artist) and his friend Captain Liberty were discussing the question of pre-natal influences. Harold, by the way, is a musician, like his father before him.

"Perhaps you won't believe me," said Harold, "but I was marked for a musical career before I was born."

"How do you mean? Because you're a musical family?" asked somebody.

"Not at all," said Harold. "Something far more practical than that. I have, quite plainly imprinted on my behind, the marks of a double bass, a bow and resin."

There were loud shouts at this, and cries of "Liar!"

"It's a fact," Harold assured us, "and I'll tell you how it happened—or how we think it happened."

"Go ahead!" we prompted him, laughing.

"Well, my father had been playing the double bass at a concert. It was a little while before I was born, and mother went to hear him. It was a nice night, so they decided to walk home. They went along for a bit and then, just as they were crossing the road, a cab came out of a turning. The horse was a bit too near mother and she stepped back quickly. Father was just behind, and the long and the short of it was that she sat down bang on the double bass he was carrying. The consequence was that I was born with those marks—and I've been sitting down on a double bass ever since."

"Not forgetting the bow and the resin, Harold," one of us put in; and there were more shouts.

"You don't believe it?" he asked.

We signified that we did not, though we had no complaints against it as a story.

"I'll bet you a quid!" said Harold.

As far as I remember it was Captain Liberty who took him up on it, though it may have been one of the others.

"But how are you going to prove it?" I asked.

"That's simple," answered Harold. There was a screen in the corner of the room and he went towards it. "I'll let my pants down and you can see for yourself."

They retired behind the screen and the disrobing took place. The money was handed over, for the marks were there, sure enough, and quite unmistakably the double bass, the bow and the resin!

My family was an expensive one, but I did not worry much about that. The success of the Octet was steady and remunerative. Our music hall work certainly was one measure of that outstanding success, for mine was the only small orchestra which "topped the bill" in the West End. Dance bands have done that frequently, of course, but it is a remarkable distinction for a small combination; yet we did it again and again. For instance, the Celeste Octet played the Victoria Palace four times in eleven months. Some of our figures, too, are interesting. We went to Tunbridge Wells for five successive years, playing twice daily, and they paid us £189 a week. The Victoria Palace engagements brought in £150 a week—twice nightly, without matinées.

At Glasgow we got £165, plus two broadcasts on two afternoons, with another broadcast at Manchester on the Sunday night, on our way home. That meant our fares between London and Manchester, with our hotel bill paid—altogether about £280 for eight players and myself for one week, from Monday to Sunday.

With regard to our gramophone engagements, I used to pay Stephen Evans (who made the majority

of our best records) £6 10s. a session for three titles only. A double session meant three whole records. I knew what it was to have a few odd thousands coming in from my records for *four whole days' work in a year*.

My theatre work was another paying proposition, and I was never there in person except for the dress rehearsal and on first nights. The exception was *Peter Pan*, at which I was always present, and then, when I had paid out the full rates (and more, to some), I still drew the nice little sum of six and a half guineas for each performance. We played for some six weeks.

Money, however, is not the only side of the question. One of the greatest satisfactions in the life of an artist, in my opinion, is personal appreciation. I do not think enough people realise that. By appreciation I do not mean fulsome flattery, for that is something far too easily seen through and discounted. I have had people gushing round me and remained quite cold, but now and then the personal element has come into it and touched me very deeply. Something of the kind happened during that time when my wife and I were scouring the countryside looking for a house, and I still think of it with pleasure.

During those wanderings of ours we came to a broken-down place at the back of Nowhere. The dilapidations were so bad that we knew at a glance that it would be useless for us to consider it. It would have cost far too much to make the house even reasonably habitable.

"We're wasting our time here, it seems to me,"

I said quietly to my wife; but the woman who was trying to run the show was so pleasant to us, and she seemed so glad to have visitors that we hadn't the heart to rush away.

We were walking round the back premises with her when, all at once, the sound of a gramophone came from an upper window. My wife and I glanced at one another. The record which was being played was Phillippe Willoughby's arrangement of *Anno Domini* (The Birth of Christ). We used the B.B.C. Choir in it and I have always regarded it as one of the Celeste's best efforts.

The woman smiled, looking up towards the window.

"That's my sister," she said. "She's been ill for months, poor thing. She loves that record. It's beautiful, isn't it? It helps her such a lot and we never get tired of it."

A commonplace anecdote in its way, perhaps, but it meant something to me, hearing it in those circumstances. I like to think that there are people feeling like that about the work one has done. A sentimental point of view, maybe, but none the worse for that. I am inclined to think that nothing is of much real use unless it is capable of appealing in such a way. I might not have seen it like that years ago, but the point of view impresses itself on me more and more strongly as I grow older.

That peculiar quality, I am convinced, is responsible for the success of many of our records. There is, for instance, *Liebestraum*, by Liszt, and *None but the Weary Heart* (Tschaikowsky), both arranged by Willoughby; *On Wings of Song* (Mendelssohn)

and, for lighter moments, Phil's arrangement of Johann Strauss's waltzes. He also made an arrangement of Liszt's Rhapsodies which is very fine and possesses that almost indefinable feeling of sympathy. It is the *sympathy* which does it, all along the line. It gets down to fundamentals, whereas a great deal of merely "popular" stuff is purely ephemeral in its appeal.

Three months is the average "life" of a popular song or dance piece, but in those cases where the span stretches into years the strain of sympathy exists without a doubt. The ordinary hearer detects it at once, and responds to it. That is why I am convinced that good music (and I use the word "good" in an elastic sense here) is a sure draw. Its vogue is constantly recurring.

I have always tried, whenever possible, to pick leaders with a sympathetic tone, because I know how essential it is to popularity. People who do not know B Flat from a bull's foot can sense that attribute and appreciate it. Technique, however brilliant, is not enough in itself. A soloist is always judged by the slow movement—the supreme test. One takes the technique for granted.

This "sympathy" is something more than a technical term. It usually indicates that quality in the player, if my experience goes for anything. Not invariably, I must admit, but what can one call camaraderie except sympathy? And I have found a fine spirit of camaraderie among the men who have worked with me—and in the musical profession generally, for that matter.

We have our upsets, jealousies and bursts of egoism, just as stage folk do, but, on the whole,

generosity and large-heartedness win all along the line. There is very little of the "dog eat dog" feeling—about which I sometimes hear business men complain. . . . I say "complain," but occasionally I wonder if it may not be a covert plea of justification!

There are people everywhere, I know, who are never happier than when they are going one better than the next man, whether it is a matter of sixpence or of thousands, but I must speak of my colleagues as I find them: a very human, loyal body of men.

Now and then, of course, one strikes a snag; some disgruntled chap with a perpetual grievance or a filthy temper. A friend of mine had such a one working for him a few years ago; a clever musician but a bad mixer. He had to sack him for the sake of the peace of mind and comfort of the others. In fact, he took him back and re-sacked him more than once. The fellow was given every chance by my friend, but he still bears a grudge against him for eventually giving him his deserts. What on earth do people expect when they refuse to fit in? Is one to upset a whole group of hard-working men for the sake of one fellow's whims and tantrums? It simply bears out my contention that a human being without discipline and self-control is a social and professional misfit. If he is an outstanding genius and works alone much of that might be overlooked, but a man who works with others has to learn the rule of give-and-take. This particular musician confined his giving and taking almost exclusively to offence.

An artiste cannot give the public his best work

if his nerves are all jangled up by private bickerings, and an argument just before a performance is the worst possible start. Any impresario will bear me out when I say that the chief thing, if one wants to get really satisfactory results from artistes, is to keep them in a good mood. I am quite ready to make reasonable allowances for some ebullitions of the "artistic temperament," but when it comes to plain bad temper I call a halt.

However, I have been lucky. I have had wonderful friendship and consideration from the folk in my profession, and my own patch of bad luck was a signal for more of it. My old friend T. Arthur Russell was running Sunday evening concerts at the *Prince of Wales's* Theatre at the time when I was making arrangements to introduce Tom Jenkins to the West End, so I wrote to him asking for a date. He gave me one, and Tom—with the Trio—topped the bill, by the way.

That was excellent, but there was a difficulty. One item of the programme called for a celeste, and the celeste is an expensive instrument to hire. For such a performance I knew that it would be at least a guinea and, being Sunday, double carriage expenses in addition. A big consideration to me just then. So I wrote to Teddy Malkin, the organist of the Octet, asking him if he would trust me for the amount till things got better. Back came a letter by return of post:

"Don't you worry about that. The celeste will be delivered and taken away immediately after the concert. As for the hiring fee—well,

can't one old pal oblige another without the question of filthy lucre coming into it?"

Good old Teddy!

And, on the subject of Tom Jenkins, there is an irrelevant story which might be told just here, and at Tom's expense. My lady pianist was discussing the summer season with me in a friendly way, and the question of dress cropped up.

"I think," said the pianist, "that I shall wear an organdie frock."

At that moment the door opened and Tom came in.

"I think that would be rather effective on the platform," I said to the lady and, with a nod to Tom she went off to make these sartorial arrangements. Tom watched her go with a countenance in which surprise and dismay were mingled. As soon as the door closed he said to me:

"She didn't really mean that about the dress, did she?"

"Why not?" I asked. "I'm sure it will be very attractive."

"But—but——" faltered Tom, who had caught no more than a couple of syllables and who, incidentally, is a modest young man. "Well, I'm not straight-laced, but what about the Corporation?"

"The Corporation?" I repeated dimly.

"Yes. . . . I mean to say . . . a *Gandhi frock* . . . wouldn't that be just a loin-cloth?"

During this bankruptcy business there was another timely deed which I am not likely to forget. The

morning before my discharge I had to appear before the judge at the County Court, and that meant finding a substitute to play for me. I got my friend Couzens, the 'cellist at the Queen's Hotel, to do this, having arranged the usual fee. But when I reached home I found a note from him asking me if he "might have the privilege of doing this little job for once without payment."

A gracious act—and a gracious way of putting it.

Mr. Wilding, another musical director in the town, made all sorts of excuses in providing me with various pieces of music for the summer. These numbers would have cost me about five or six shillings each and he knew, as I did, that such items have a nasty way of mounting up.

"Oh, you'd better have this, old man," he would say, with the utmost casualness. "It's a fine number and I've got it duplicated."

One would have thought, from the manner of these friends, that I was conferring a favour rather than accepting it! A man who can do a kind action in that way has certainly brought giving to a fine art. I don't suppose such methods are always "good business," but to my mind they are something better than that: *practical humanity and practical religion*. And at times, evidently, they even come under the heading of good business, as a true story I once heard will show. It was told me, years ago, by a man in the Navy.

This fellow's aunt kept a drapery store in a small country town. It was quite a sound little establishment in its way, though it never did much more than

provide the owner with a livelihood and a bit over for her old age. Bad debts were a serious matter to a woman in her position, but they didn't happen very often. In such a small community, I imagine, it isn't easy to get away with them. There is too much talk about the whole thing for a debtor's comfort.

Anyhow, there was quite a lot of tittle-tattle in that town about a certain resident, and the wise-acres came to my friend's aunt and told her to send in her bill and scoop in her money right away if she wanted it at all. As a matter of fact, the bill had gone in some time before, but without any result. The shopkeeper didn't say very much, but she kept her eyes and ears open, and eventually came to the conclusion that the money was as good as lost.

"And I shan't pester the poor soul about it, neither," she said to her nephew. "It's a few precious pounds to me and I shall miss it, but if I go dunning her it'll be hell for her. I don't want it on my conscience that I've driven the poor creature half out of her mind."

"Oh, come now!" said my pal. "That's silly."

"That's common decency!" replied the old lady sharply.

One night, some weeks later, there was a knock at the door and the old lady opened it. On the step was the defaulting customer with an envelope in her hand.

"This is for you, Mrs. E——," she whispered. "Every penny I owe you. I've pretty well skinned everything to get it, but there 'tis. Don't breathe

a word—we're slipping out of town before it's light, but I couldn't go without settling up with you. You're the only one in the place that hasn't made my life a misery for the last six months!"

Another good friend of mine is Hannen Swaffer. I was stopping in an hotel with the Octet on one occasion, when the waiter came up to me and said that a gentleman was inquiring for me. It was Swaffer, on his way to a lecture at Canterbury, and he had broken his journey to call. We talked for quite a long time and then he went. At luncheon my wife asked me what he had to say.

"Oh, just this and that," I answered. "A friendly chat, that's all. As a matter of fact I think I did most of the talking, but he seemed full of questions this morning."

We thought no more about it, but the following Sunday I found that he had given me a couple of columns in *The People*. It was a generous effort to give me a lift up.

That reminds me of a certain dust-up I once had on the question of publicity. When Columbia issued a record of mine (the 2nd Rhapsodie of Liszt) it was rather adversely criticised by a critic in Compton Mackenzie's paper *The Gramophone*. The criticism was signed "Peppering," and, full of wrath, I wrote to "Mr. Peppering" and told him off soundly and well. I had some very gratifying moments imagining the complete wilting of the fellow Peppering, in consequence. By the same post I also wrote to my friend Christopher Stone (the Editor) and asked him if he would be good enough to give prominence to my record in his weekly "new records"

broadcast. Chris wrote back and said that he would be pleased to do so.

Some time after this Herbert Ridout and I were talking. Ridout being the advertising manager of the Columbia it was a good opportunity, I thought, to speak my mind on the question of Pepperering and my opinion of him.

"Why," said Ridout, "don't you know who 'Pepperering' is? He's Christopher Stone."

Chris had the laugh on me that time, sure enough; but he kept his word about his "talk."

CHAPTER XIX

ANYBODY who imagines that bankruptcy is an easy way out is sadly mistaken. There is something about the whole proceeding which swamps one. At least, that is my opinion.

It all happened with such suddenness. Within two hours the representative of the Official Receiver was in the flat taking an inventory of every blessed thing we possessed. It was a sort of spiritual undressing act, into the bargain, for in my examination my entire life, right from the time when I left school, was scrutinised. But in return for candour on my part, and the laying of all my cards on the table, I was treated with every possible consideration. When I eventually applied for my discharge the judge granted it within a period of two days—and I had been prepared for a six months' wait at the lowest estimate. The judge expressed sympathy with me, too, for it was clear to him that this misfortune had not happened through any fault of my own. His kindness and humanity did a lot to help me.

But the wood seemed very dark in those days before I was out of it. I do not think shyness and timidity have ever been marked failings of mine, but I suffered from them then! I was glad to get

indoors out of the range of those hostile and inquisitive eyes in the street. Possibly they were neither as hostile nor as inquisitive as I thought in my newly sensitive state; anyway, now that it is over I am prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt.

If I learned what it was to be humiliated I learned, too, what it means to see solid comradeship stand up under the test. There was my old colleague, Phillippe Willoughby, who was one of my creditors, though none of our transactions had ever been put on paper. If I had chosen to deny liability he would not have been able to produce a shred of evidence, but Phil and I understood and trusted each other. He turned up at my public examination, ready to put in a good word for me if necessary, and stood by me all through.

There were men in the town, too, who did not waver in their friendship for a moment, and they will never know how grateful I was to them.

Charles Brinckley, with his unfailing cheerfulness, put new heart into me every day. When Charles met me in the street there was no wavering of the eye, but always the smile and handshake I had always known. There was Norman Gray, Entertainments Manager for the Corporation of Hastings, who saw to it that there were choice Havanas for me at Christmas; there was Harry Hanson, who showed the kindly gesture of a kindly man. Harry runs the Court Players in Hastings, and my wife and I had made a regular thing of attending the performances; but that pleasant diversion, we decided, had to go, along with the other little extravagances.

Harry countered this by putting us on the complimentary list and giving us the best seats in the house.

My bank manager, Bernard Green, was another staunch friend, and when I got my discharge he celebrated it by sending me a beautifully executed little bit of script surrounding a brand new George VI penny "to mark an important event in 1937." I have the whole thing, penny and all, framed and hanging on my wall now, to remind me of the unfailing good humour for which it stands.

The headmaster of Jim's school—Mr. Wallace King, of King's College, Hastings,—met me in the matter of fees when I said that I should have to take the boy away.

"There's a boy I don't want to lose," he said. "Pay what you can."

It was such consideration as this that kept me going.

What I had not been prepared for was the loud burst of publicity. As soon as the news of the bankruptcy got out the telephone at home started jangling, with London newspaper men at the other end of it, and when I came out of the court, after my private examination, there were half-a-dozen reporters on the doorstep. I had not bargained for that.

They looked to me depressingly like vultures gathering about the carcass, and I began to wonder how I could manage to transport the corpse undetected. I stepped back into hiding and the Assistant Official Receiver whispered a word of advice.

"Better give them a straight account yourself," he said. "You don't want them to get hold of some garbled version."

With touching faith I did as I was told. The "boys" flocked round and I talked; and as I warmed to my subject I became almost lyrical.

"I should like," I said, "to give a dinner at the Savoy when I get my discharge." My imagination ran on. "I should like to invite all my creditors and pay them in full, plus five per cent. interest from the day I went bankrupt."

It was a pretty fancy, but it certainly was not an avowed intention. Yet thus did these young bloods of the Press translate it in the papers on the following morning, under glaring headlines, with the result that I was called over the coals, in no uncertain fashion, by the Official Receiver!

I have not had a great deal of faith, since then, in mere man's power to prevent "garbling." Neither speech nor silence, it seems, can insure him against that.

There was I, my yearly engagement over, out of a job, with four children to consider and my liability to Tom Jenkins starting in a fortnight. And now all this.

I walked along the sea-front, feeling cornered and (for the moment, at least) desperate. I had fought my way out of many a tight hole in my time, but here was something I could not fight. What, in heaven's name, could I do now?

And then a voice hailed me. I looked up and saw Mr. Spence crossing the road towards me.

"Hello!" he said. "I've seen the papers. Why,

if the Mayor and Corporation went broke they wouldn't create the stir you've done. . . . How are you feeling?"

"Rotten!" I answered. "All debts and no work."

"No work?" he repeated. "Nonsense, my dear man. You've got a job. Your old job—with me. You'll start in the café again on Monday week. And bring Jenkins with you."

I went home jubilant. The relief was tremendous, almost painful. The very first day of my bankruptcy—and already I was staging a come-back.

Within six months I had put Tom Jenkins on the map as a musician, and to-day his name is becoming known in London. He has made short talking pictures and gramophone records, broadcast solo recitals and, incidentally, doubled his salary.

There is one acidly-amusing story which concerns broadcasting, and I might as well tell it here. A certain orchestra, which had been broadcasting for the B.B.C., wanted to change its leader, but the B.B.C. pointed out that, under its new rule, there must be an audition with the proposed leader. They had approved the same man previously as a soloist, but this was a different proposition, and the edict went forth.

The orchestra gave the audition and then sat back to wait for the pronouncement. For six whole weeks they heard nothing. Then, at long last, a letter arrived. It stated that the proposed leader, in their estimation, was not entirely satisfactory *as such*, but they very clemently suggested that

they would be prepared to give another audition on some future occasion.

The cream of the joke is that this self-same man had been the leader of another orchestra which had been broadcasting for them for the past two years!

Actually, the rule about auditions is so much "hooey." Many of the players occupying seats in the B.B.C. orchestras have never had an audition in their lives. True, some of them would refuse to give one, their reputations being sufficient; but there are others who are a long way below the standard required of the rank and file who are qualifying for the £10 a week standard (plus a pound a week for Income Tax)—the lowest salary paid to ordinary players of this type. However, these no-audition folk are put in by influential people and that is considered enough. It is an unfair practice; in fact, there is a lot about the B.B.C. which needs overhauling where orchestral broadcasting is concerned. I am not alone in thinking that there is far too much favouritism, and victimisation going on in that institution for its spiritual health, or for the public interest. In the old days a man stood or fell by his own merits, but that system does not maintain now. It has been superseded by a sort of Old-School-Tie Fraternity flapdoodle and the cult of snobbery, and the public suffers in consequence.

At one time, to my knowledge, there was not one man on the Selection Committee who had ever had a professional engagement. This condition of things has been modified, certainly, but there is still a

profusion of square pegs in round holes. It is a trifle difficult to see why such a factor as a University acquaintanceship with one of the Powers-that-be should qualify a man for a job when it comes to musical broadcasts, or why his orchestra should be given a contract *without a hearing* on the strength of it. Yet such things have happened, to the detriment of others who are willing to prove their worth and entertainment value by ordinary, common sense tests.

There is now a nice, cosy system of handing out work to pals; there are people "sitting pretty." In fact, the entire question is creating great dissatisfaction in the musical world—and outside it, among people who know what is going on.

Those protégées, too . . . on the air every week, scooping in the money, sometimes being paid more than double the amount paid to other combinations. Not because they are any better or work any harder, but because they are sponsored by somebody with a bit of influence. The majority of the other players know perfectly well what is going on, how the whole thing smells of rank favouritism, but what can they do about it? One squeak out of them and they would be boycotted.

There is one comfort. The longer it goes on the bigger will be the row when the lid is prised off the whole business. Once let the steady-going British public wake up to the fact that its sense of fair play is being violated—and that it is paying ten shillings per annum for the privilege—and the row will start. That much is certain.

I have this question of broadcasting at heart for a very good reason. The Octet owes much of its popularity to its work in the earlier days of the B.B.C. and this has given me an added sense of responsibility towards the public and towards musicians. It must be understood, of course, that I am concerned only with the question of small orchestras; I am *not* criticising the B.B.C. as a whole.

My Octet toured all the main stations of the B.B.C. In fact, the tour was done twice, and no other orchestra has fulfilled such an engagement with them at any time. But we owed none of this to the sort of wire-pulling which goes on to-day. The Octet was a success on its merits; I picked my men carefully, tried to treat them fairly and they gave me (and the public) of their best. When big money came in we felt that we had honestly earned it. It was because the public thought us worth paying for, and we never relied on favouritism in any form.

I bank on merit every time. One must "deliver the goods." Some of our most successful men have started from scratch—and all honour to them. The story of Irving Berlin proves that if the right stuff is there, coupled with perseverance, a man can make good—given a fair chance.

Berlin saw his chance and took it; that is all. The prompt delivery of that second verse to Waterson did the trick in his case.

There is another man, a close friend of mine, who showed something of the same spirit: Lawrence Wright. Lawrie came to London with only £18 in his pocket and determination in his heart. He

meant to fight his way up in the music publishing world. At first he sold threepenny editions of his own songs in the market at Leicester. Later, for the purposes of his work, he assumed the name of "Horatio Nicholls" and brought out compositions that are now famous all over the world. In that way he broke new ground and found success. The man who peddled his songs for threepence eventually paid £147,000 for the Prince's Theatre.

What is more, success has not spoiled him. He is just the same as he was thirty years ago. Lawrie is the man who put Denmark Street "on the map" of the popular-music world. There were no other publishers there when he opened his one-room office; to-day Denmark Street is "Tin Pan Alley"—England's famous centre of popular music. He believes in work, for in addition to controlling his gigantic business he puts on a yearly show at the North Pier, Blackpool.

Another man who has "arrived" through sheer grit and personal merit is Bert Feldman. Bert is a Yorkshireman, and one of the most colourful personalities in the publishing world. Bert had a flair for picking winners in songs, and his first success was "Nineteen Jolly Good Boys All in a Row," followed shortly afterwards by "Strolling Round the Town," which, I believe, he got for the sum of seven-and-six. But in those days songs often changed hands for a mere trifle, and such things as royalties were practically unknown.

I sat with him once in Jerome Remick's office in New York, listening to a succession of compositions that looked like going on till Doomsday. Bert

missed not a note of any of it, and all at once he called out:

"Sing me the second verse of that song again, will you?"

He heard the repetition and stood up.

"O.K., boys. I've got the song I want. That'll do."

It was "Beautiful Garden of Roses," and was first sung in this country by Arthur Aldrige at the London Pavilion. Bert had made no mistake, for he sold 150,000 copies in the first month.

Bert's gift for "picking" was not limited to songs, evidently. He once backed Signorietta for the Derby because—as he expressed it—"it looked a nice horse and had no friends." It won at 100 to one against!

The house of Feldman is a one-man affair; not a limited company. Bert is a bachelor whose love is in his business; and when he moved into his premises in Shaftesbury Avenue he delegated the opening ceremony to his mother. No outsiders for Bert. That ceremony was intended as a compliment to the woman to whom he admits he owes everything. The new premises cost something over a quarter of a million, so one may guess that the family admiration was mutual.

It is men like these that I am proud to "enter on my list of friends." Workers, not wire-pullers.

Wire-pulling and favouritism, where the arts are concerned, are fundamentally unsound. A man or woman who gets in by the back door never stays in long.

An artiste of any sort must make up his mind to work hard and hand out the best that is in him.

"Wangling" may give second-raters a footing for a while, but it is a precious slippery one. In all the arts the *established* individual, whether living or dead, proves that personal merit is the essential factor in the long run. There are writers, painters and sculptors, for instance, who flash into public notice on account of some showiness or eccentricity in their work, but if the work has no real value the fuss soon dies down and nobody ever hears of these folk again.

I am against favouritism and "wangling" because they produce spurious results and create a false standard. They are discouraging to honest talent.

I am always hearing of musicians who are anxious to get a small orchestra "on the air," in the belief that once they can do so their name is made. I think it is only kindness to explode this fallacy. Those dreams of consequent headlines in the Press are not at all likely to become anything more than dreams, as a matter of fact.

In the early days of broadcasting things were different from present conditions. People were accustomed to hearing three small orchestras on alternate Sunday evenings, and the next morning they would discuss the programmes with their friends in homes, shops, factories, trains and offices. Thus the reputation of these three orchestras grew in this country. Who were these three? De Groot at the Piccadilly Hotel, Albert Sandler at the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, and the J. H. Squire Celeste Octet in the studio. All three have succeeded in establishing a universal name by now, but this widening of scope was *not* due to broadcasting.

All three combinations owed their solid popularity to the gramophone: de Groot on H.M.V., Albert and myself on Columbia.

As I say, broadcasting may establish a local popularity, but it is very unlikely to go beyond that. There are perhaps a hundred small orchestras, all over the country, getting an occasional turn on the air, but there is a strong tendency, where the ordinary listener is concerned, for their work to "go in one ear and out at the other." The average listener does not even trouble to notice whose orchestra it is, and even when it makes an impression on him he is scarcely likely to rush round to his friends and say: "Have you heard So-and-so's wonderful rendering?"

A gramophone record is a very different matter. He can listen as often as he likes. He can play it over to his friends and, as often as not, they go off and buy one for themselves. In that way popularity is cumulative. It extends to other countries. In fact, I sold more Celeste records in Australia than I did in England.

The proof of this insularity of small orchestras on the Radio is borne out by the fact that a foreigner would be very hard put to it to name a single one of them. Similarly, the ordinary listener in this country would be at his wits' end to name a small orchestra on a foreign station. Even popular music-hall "stars," when broadcasting, suffer from this localisation.

Not long ago I was speaking to a woman who is a professional musician, and she mentioned that such-and-such a combination was appearing in

her town that week. I happened to know this combination and was aware of the fact that they broadcast frequently; yet this woman said to me:

"Who are they? I've never heard of them."

I feel that young and ambitious musicians should be made to realise the importance of records instead of feverishly imagining that, in the case of the small orchestra, broadcasting is the great hope. Such a conviction leads only to disappointment.

For my part, every time I pass a gramophone shop I share something of the sentiment of the retired bacon magnate in the play, *Our Boys*, where he says: "Yes, and if I'm walking along a country road, every time I meets a pig, ma'm, I raises me 'at to 'im!"

In Japan, when the Crown Prince of that country, at Louis Sterling's invitation, made the first record to be issued by the Japanese factory, it was a record of the Celeste Octet. Every country bought these records of ours because they were understandable by everybody. Music is the universal language and we were fortunate enough to be able to gauge public taste.

And here is another tip for aspirants: *Get a new name for your orchestral combination.* The title *Celeste Octet*, originated by me in 1913, is my copyright. Nobody else can use that; but innumerable people have gone as near to it as they can. There are hoards of Octets, Quintets, Sextets and what not by now and the device has been worn threadbare. Avoid the temptation to be imitative; get something new and you may stand a chance. Again,

do not play from printed parts, for you will only be doing something a bit better or a bit worse than the great majority. Have your own special arrangements; create ideas—don't copy them.

Young composers, too, will be wise in associating themselves, at the first opportunity, with houses of repute. They should beware of the "catch" contract, the various devices for twisting the last ha'penny out of the poor or unknown composer. Established houses do not go in for that sort of thing; they have a reputation for integrity to maintain—and they do it. With such a firm as Boosey, for instance—and I speak from personal experience—one is assured of courtesy and fair treatment. Here one finds dignity of the old-fashioned kind, and any young composer dealing with the principals here can rest assured that he is dealing with gentlemen. I had ample proof of that after my £1,000 advance from this firm. I fell ill soon after that transaction, and it looked as though Boosey's had made a bad investment. But was there any unpleasantness about it? Not on your life! What I got was a letter from Leslie Boosey expressing sympathy and a hope of my speedy recovery.

If the time should come when Boosey's get another winner from me they will not be a whit more pleased than I shall be about it. I should like to feel that they stand to get something more from me—with interest.

Florian Williams (of the house of Joseph Williams, Ltd.) is another man to whom I must pay tribute. He and I have always been on friendly terms in the past, and recently, when I told him that I was

taking up an engagement at Gorleston, he was interested. I admitted to him that I was handicapped by lack of music and by the cost of it, at which he immediately wrote to me, expressing his pleasure that I was back in my legitimate sphere of work and placing his whole catalogue at my disposal. I was not to worry about the cost, for the good reason that there would not be any.

In short, my experience is that if one gives a good firm good work and establishes a sound footing it pays all round. A young composer, starting out, will gain nothing in the end by contact with shoddy firms and shady methods.

CHAPTER XX

I HAVE always wanted to help musicians, and I think I have been able to do so in my time. There are men at the top of the tree who know that they owe something to that "picking" of mine, but I had the welfare of the rank and file at heart too. Even before the War I was paying big salaries, and I knew that I was instrumental in improving general conditions for British players.

My salary list, for a period of eighteen years in London, averaged £20,000 a year, and of that entire amount less than £100 was paid to foreigners. Any foreigner regularly employed by me was a naturalised Englishman. My theory was that if a man was good enough to fight for us he was good enough to work for us, and I still think so.

In the old days the pay for dance orchestras was eighteen shillings per man a night for a dance in London, the time being five, six or seven hours. Clifford Essex and I altered that. During the War we put the money up to two and a half guineas, charging our artistes only ten per cent. as our commission.

We also introduced overtime at the rate of a guinea an hour per man after five hours. Essex and I felt strongly on this question of poor payment, and we were determined to do away with the existing miserable conditions as far as possible.

Orchestral work is skilled work and it makes great demands on the stamina of the players. The consequent strain demands, for its counteraction, good food, comfortable living conditions and reasonable freedom from financial worry.

There is another side of this musical business which has always interested me. I remember a young fellow saying to me, years ago: "Why is it I can't seem to put it over? My playing's all right—I know it, but I can't seem to make the headway X—— does." He mentioned a popular violinist who had trained with him.

"My boy, it's an easy answer to that one," I answered. "You play as well as he does, but he's got something you haven't got."

"What's that?"

"Poise and repose. He knows how to manage his hands and feet. And how to stand still, which is just as important. He's a bit of an actor, in fact, and you aren't. It's no good coming on looking like something that had strayed from a sight-seeing party and lost itself."

"Do I look like that?" he asked in horror.

"As near as dammit," I told him. "You're nervous. Well, a lot of people suffer from that, but it never does to let an audience know it. If you went off somewhere and took a course in deportment it would do you a world of good. You're afraid you are going to be awkward—and awkward you are. Get the trick of managing your body like a good showman and you'll be all right."

I should like to give that advice to a good many

young musicians. They are too aware of themselves and of the audience; afraid to stage manage their entrances and exits; and so, in spite of undoubted talent, they never rise out of the mediocre class.

Albert Sammons, in my opinion, is an excellent example of good deportment. He comes on easily, gracefully, with a sense of competence and comfort which immediately captivates his audiences and creates the right atmosphere for undivided attention.

When one considers it, why should any competent artiste feel embarrassment on the platform? After all, he is playing to one listener only, for each member of his audience hears him *individually*. It is the greatest mistake for a player, in his imagination, to magnify that single entity into a sort of Hydra-headed monster. It is a purely nervous trick and has no basis in reason. True, he may not please everybody there, but the same condition might exist if he were playing to a mere handful of people; yet I doubt if even the most nervous player would suffer very much if one person—let us say—out of a group of six listeners were over-critical.

A public performer of any kind must acquire the knack of being unafraid of people in the mass, and that is best achieved by learning how to manage the body. I sometimes think I should like to inaugurate a School of Deportment for Aspiring Players. It is an idea, anyway, and every time I see some angular, self-conscious, gawky fellow up there I feel that I might be supplying a long-felt public want!

I should probably run it on much the same lines as the Army and the Police train their horses to

ignore crowds and processions. The success of that particular curriculum, at least, indicates that my notion has something in it.

This dissertation on deportment reminds me, for some reason, of an untoward incident, years ago, which amused an audience when the Octet was playing. However, it happened through no fault of mine, heaven knows, and the Octet certainly was not responsible.

The lady in the case was not lacking in self-assurance. Indeed, she had more than her fair share; but I doubt if she ever felt quite the same again after that remarkable experience.

A West End house engaged us to play at a mannequin parade: a very modish affair. I was not at all anxious to undertake the job, as a matter of fact, and when I was approached I named a fee which I thought would be prohibitive. To my surprise they agreed without question, so we duly turned up for a morning rehearsal.

The lady in charge had been a famous mannequin in her time and she was not easy to please. It was a trying morning for all. We finally arranged things to her satisfaction, with one exception, which was the musical accompaniment to her own particular stunt. The final episode was to be a bridal display and she was to come on *solo*, right at the end, as The Bride's Mother.

She turned down tune after tune.

"No!" she said, time after time, as I made suggestions. "That won't do. It won't do at *all*. You don't seem to have the least idea what I want!"



ORCHESTRA. J. H. SQUIRE IN CENTRE; LEADER, TOM JENKINS

I took another look at her and it occurred to me that perhaps something contemporaneous with her own heyday might meet the case. I sat down at the piano and began tinkling away at a few of the mellower favourites. She listened sceptically and I began to think that our chances of satisfying her were nil; and then, quite accidentally, I dropped into a tune which arrested her attention.

"That's it!" she said, stopping me. "That's what I want."

"But——" I ventured.

"It has the right lilt."

"But——" I began again.

"I like it," she interrupted firmly.

"But we can't play that!" I protested. "You see——"

"We'll have that. Kindly play that tune when I come on and let us have no further argument."

"Oh, very well!" I answered. It was her funeral, I decided. The rehearsal broke up.

The afternoon arrived and with it a large attendance. Everything went off admirably and the bridal procession wafted by. The announcer introduced the various characters and we played the chosen accompaniments.

Then the Bride's Mother appeared, confident as ever, and we struck up.

As I had expected, from all over the hall came shrieks of laughter.

The tune the august lady had insisted upon was Marie Lloyd's famous song: "*I'm One of the Ruins that Cromwell Knocked about a Bit.*"

When the crash came we moved into a smaller flat. That was one of the first things to happen. I wasn't too happy about that at first, for after having plenty of elbow-room for so long I had visions of people cannoning into each other every moment of the day, of privacy murdered and tempers frayed; but I was wrong. We very soon learned how to make room for one another, how to accommodate ourselves to the new conditions.

In many ways I find myself actually preferring it. There is a snugness about it, and when one wants a thing . . . well, there it is, within reach, as likely as not. One develops a philosophy to suit the circumstances, and I often think of a friend of my wife's: a woman who lost her money and had to move into a bed-sitting room. It was—she assured us—not bad as bed-sitting rooms go, and it had its compensations. But old friends who still visited her were loud in commiseration. They cast scandalised eyes into the cupboard and behind the curtain and wailed shrilly.

"You *poor* thing! How can you bear to live in a room *with a sink*?" they inquired.

It was the sink that got them, every time.

"But that's absurd!" replied the philosopher in residence. "If you've got to live in one room surely it's better to have a sink than not?"

In our little place we no longer ring bells when we want something done: we do it ourselves. We have discovered all sorts of aptitudes we never knew we had; we make and mend and contrive. A lot of the excitement and ingenuity of the Swiss Family

Robinson is ours in these days. Everything is so much better than we thought it was going to be.

I have thought, many times, of what my dear old mother said to me that day, long ago, when we were talking about money. She was quite right, of course. There *is* something more important—far more, and I have discovered what it is.

If we find ourselves sitting on top of the world again, with money and to spare, I shall still have that extra and priceless possession. Contentment and a quiet spirit. And for that I have one person to thank . . . my wife.

It has been a grand life, with a little of everything in it. I am quite a long way off old age yet, but I think I know why old folk who have had a full measure of living can settle back in a corner somewhere and enjoy themselves all over again with their memories. The main thing, I suppose, is to have something to remember. Well, I shall never lack that.

I look at people sometimes: staid individuals going along the streets, and I wonder if, under all that respectability and decorum, an adventurer is secreting himself, all unsuspected. I like to think of secret buccaneers in bowler hats and born warriors carrying umbrellas. It makes the world a jollier place for all of us. Possibly we misjudge a lot of our fellows.

I, myself, have been misjudged in my time. Crossing the Atlantic, quite recently, I was walking the almost deserted deck one morning when the Purser came up to me.

"Feeling all right?" he asked, with unexpected solicitude.

"Er—yes, thank you," I answered. "Why?"

"It's a bit rough," he explained.

I had not noticed it. I glanced over the side.

"Is it?"

He cocked an eye at me.

"This isn't your first crossing, I take it?"

"No," I smiled. "This is my hundred and fifth."

"Oh. . . ." said the Purser, and passed on inconspicuously.

I am still a sailor at heart, and I love the sea. I have seen it in all its moods and it has seen me in all of mine. The sea can take away ruthlessly, but it gives in good measure too. The thing I have always begrudged it most was the life of that fine seaman, George Blake, the man who saved my own life. Yet somehow I feel that George Blake himself, splendid fellow that he was, would not have begrudged that final sacrifice.

I had some rough times at sea, but when I look back I do not want to cut out any of them. There was tragedy, but there was comedy too, and even farce. Once, I remember, I took part in a spectacular rescue from drowning, with unexpected results to myself. We were in tropical waters at the time, and the heat was blistering. I was up on deck, doing a spot of work and thinking longingly of four o'clock—four hours away—when we should be allowed to have our dip. I leaned over the side and watched one of our men who, suspended in a kind of cradle, was painting the ship's side.

Suddenly the cradle slipped and he fell into the sea. Without a moment's hesitation (as a reporter would have put it, no doubt, had one been present), I dived in and swam strongly to the rescue. When the pair of us clambered up on deck again an officer saw us.

"What have you been doing?" he asked me severely, regarding my dripping hair and ducks.

"Brown fell out of that cradle, sir," I answered, "and I went in to rescue him."

"Nonsense!" snapped the officer. "You know as well as I do that Brown is the best swimmer in the ship!"

He was perfectly correct. I had always known it. I was given fourteen days' "Ten A" for breaking ship; but that was a glorious dip, all the same.

There has been a great deal about friends in this story of mine, I know, but that was inevitable. But for them, perhaps, there would not have been any story at all. Those buffetings I had as a youngster and a young man taught me how important friends are. Glancing back I see them like signposts on the journey I have made. It is queer how clearly they stand out. If poor old Kerryman, for instance, had not shown me that rough kindness what would have happened to me? If Mr. Lidiard had never felt that generous interest in me what sort of life should I have known? And so it goes on all the way. I have seen a good slice of the world and found pals everywhere; and I do not think a man can ask much more than that.

I always get a kick out of it, even now, when I hear of some nipper wanting to "run away to sea." What on earth should I say to him if he asked my advice? I hope the situation will never become acute, for I really don't know. It depends on so many things, and I was one of the lucky ones, I suppose. There were times when I felt anything but lucky, I'll admit, but if it all led me to where I am to-day I have no complaints.

I imagine that the reader who has been looking for the Purple Patches of Bohemia will be disappointed by now, for my life hasn't run to those particular shades. I have known plenty of Bohemians but they were mostly the genuine article and therefore more or less the colour of ordinary humanity. The most brilliant of my friends, I have noticed, are people who have tried to impress me with their friendship rather than with their brilliance. I cannot hand them a better testimonial than that.

There is one thing—and a thing I never suspected—about an autobiography. It certainly licks life into shape. One starts off without much sense of pattern, but the pattern is there, right enough, and it soon begins to show itself. I begin to see—like that dear old woman who was my friend—that everything is grist to one's mill. People who are afraid of life are like people who starve themselves for fear of getting indigestion. They are miserable anyway. Well, I have bitten off some pretty big mouthfuls in my time, and if I have had an occasional pain it has all been in the way of what I have heard called "educational experience." If I live to be old

I shall have plenty to ponder over—and I have a sneaking suspicion that this is one of the most solid provisions one can make for the “sere and yellow.” I once heard a young woman make a remark to that effect when her friends were scolding her for gadding round the world instead of taking some secure job at home and saving every penny for her old age.

“At a pinch,” she said, “the State will see that I get some bread-and-scrape and a bed when I’m eighty, but there isn’t a State on earth that can give me what I’m getting now—something to enjoy in my mind.”

I hold no brief for that young woman, but she had the courage of her convictions, at least.

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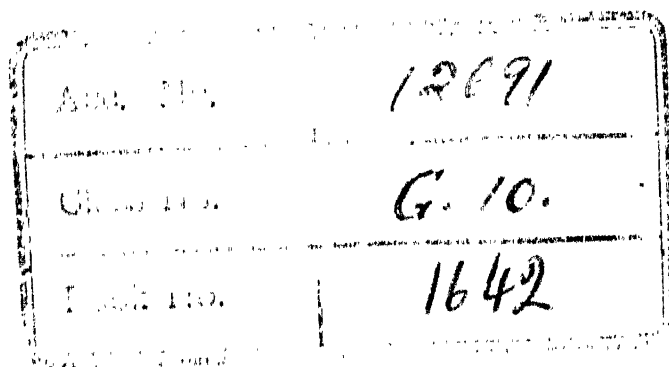
So here it is: a tale of adventure, of narrow escapes, of fighting of all kinds, of poverty and struggle, money and music. Mixed enough, in all conscience. Baldly told, perhaps, and with few of the frills most people expect; but there you are.

But I think it is something else as well. Dare I call it a love story? That is how it seems to me, anyway. I do not know what else one can call a tale of two people who have been in the clouds together, plumbed the depths together and come up again . . . still together. I must be forgiven if I am a little sentimental about that. It is the only part of the story which matters very much to me now.

I am a happy man today, and for that I have one person to thank—my wife. I do not know, any

more than the next man, what is ahead of us, though the future looks bright enough. But of one thing I am certain; as long as she goes on smiling I shall never know the real meaning of the word "adversity." And when I have said that I have said it all.

THE END



SOME OF THE THINGS
that have placed
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Pavilion, Hastings, 25th September, 1937)

J. H. SQUIRE (apart from his Octet work) has been Musical Director of no less than SIX West End Theatres at the same time and all for opposition managements. Conducted PETER PAN in London, for the late Sir James Barrie, for 10 years. Introduced Ragtime to London in 1911. Had the first English JAZZ Band to play in the West End. Received the highest advance Royalty ever paid to a Composer from an English Publishing House, viz.: £1,000 down, before he wrote a note. Was the only British Conductor of a "Straight" Orchestra ever to receive "Royalties" on his Gramophone records. In addition to this, in the comparatively short space of 15 years he paid over £300,000 in salaries to BRITISH MUSICIANS. With the Earl of Lauderdale and Sir Henry Wood, he is also a Vice-President of the British Authors' and Composers' Society.

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No one is better fitted than Miss Bowen to compile and annotate so remarkable a collection of letters; her choices could not be improved upon and her explanatory comments are admirably clear and to the point.

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"To all who appreciate the infinite variety of living, its violence, and its irresistible lack of logic, I dedicate this story of ordinary people in circumstances more or less fantastic."

The above paragraphs have been taken from the Preface of Rosita Forbes's latest book. For many reasons *These Are Real People* must rank as Miss Forbes's most important work because not only does it tell of remote and little-known quarters of the globe but also of the queer peoples that inhabit them. It is a deeply interesting and informative narrative.

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General French's name (afterwards Earl of Ypres) first came into prominence when almost immediately after landing in South Africa at the beginning of the Second Boer War he fought and won the battle of Elandslaagte.

Throughout the campaign—for him one of almost unbroken success—he kept in his own writing a record of events from day to day, and it is from those diaries, punctiliously written up in the Field, that the extracts reproduced in this volume have been taken.

Similarly in the Great War, as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in France and Flanders and afterwards as Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces, he carefully recorded the daily happenings, interspersed with his own opinions.

Finally, the exceptionally large number of friends possessed by Lord Ypres entailed extensive correspondence, many of the letters both written and received by him being of considerable interest and historic value. For the purposes of this work, a selection of the more noteworthy has been made.

It should be added that all the entries contained in this profoundly stirring book have been chosen with due regard to general interest.

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